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EDITED BY

MRS OLIPHANT

CORNEILLE AND RACINE

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CORNEILLE AND RACINE

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BY

HENRY M. TROLLOPE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

For the greater part of the translations in the present volume the writer is responsible. Save in a few passages in the "Cid," where the version, in the measure of the original, has been supplied by a friend, he has thought it better to render the meaning of the French verses into English prose than to attempt verses of his own. He is not aware of any English translation into verse of the plays of Corneille which would be endured now, even by the most patient reader. The best, perhaps, is Ambrose Philip's English version of Racine's "Andromaque," known under the title of "The Distressed Mother," which must have found admirers in London during the last century; for many editions of it were printed, and it was several times performed upon our stage. The translations of the choruses in "Athalie," by Randolph and Knight, will be acknowledged in their proper place.

The writer also desires to express his acknowledg-

ments for the use he has made of the edition of Corneille by M. Marty-Laveaux, and of the edition of Racine by M. Paul Mesnard, especially of the Biographical Notice in the latter work; and also of the 'Histoire de la Vie de Corneille' by the late M. Taschereau.

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CORNEILLE.

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

PIERRE CORNEILLE, the oldest French dramatist with whose name the world is familiar, was born at Rouen, in Normandy, on the 6th of June 1606. He was the eldest of seven children of Pierre Corneille, grand-master of the woods and forests in the Vicomté of Rouen. We know little of his bringing up, except that he was educated by the Jesuits at Rouen, and that when he was a boy of fourteen he had given to him a large folio volume as a prize for good conduct or for proficiency in some branch of learning. Also, probably a few years later, he obtained another prize for a translation into French verse of the 'Pharsalia' of Lucan. Lucan and Seneca seem to have been his favourites among the Latin authors; and many years afterwards, Boileau reproached him for not being able to distinguish the difference between Lucan and Virgil. Corneille kept an affectionate remembrance of his school-days,

for in the year 1668 the Père Delidel, one of his old masters, asked him to write a few verses as preface to a book which he was going to publish; and the poet, then past sixty, composed for his old friend and instructor an ode expressing his gratitude for benefits received in former days, and attributing to the master all the merit which the pupil had acquired from his teaching.

In 1624, when he was only eighteen years of age, Corneille was formally admitted and sworn in as an advocate before the Parliament at Rouen; but it does not appear that he ever made any serious attempt to practise at the bar. It is probable that he felt himself to be timid and awkward, and that he feared his unreadiness of speech would stand in the way of his making a success as an advocate. In 1628, his father bought for him a judicial appointment; but this new office does not seem to have employed much of his time, or to have added materially to his income.

When Corneille was thirty years of age he wrote "The Cid,"—the play which, more than any other, has made his name popular. Until that time he had not made himself known, except to the actors and others who took an interest in the theatre. His early plays were probably better than those of others of the time, but they did not create for him a reputation beyond the walls of Paris. His first play was a comedy called "Mélite,"—a name which he took from that of a young lady, a Mademoiselle Milet, with whom he was much in love. He had written and addressed a sonnet to her, which he afterwards developed into a five-act comedy in verse. The sonnet is introduced into the play in the fourth scene of the second act. It was the custom with

writers in those days to make their capital out of the stories and adventures of the day. They would often depict what took place in actual society. It was customary to make use of ladies' names, and ladies liked it; but Mademoiselle Milet was of a sterner nature than others, and she quarrelled with the poet who had thus immortalised her.

"Mélite" first appeared in 1629. Corneille intrusted his piece to Mondory, the chief of a company of actors then at Rouen; and Mondory thought the play so good, that he determined to take his troupe to Paris and test the merit of the comedy before an appreciative audience. It had a great success, and the author's name soon became known in the theatrical world. Speaking of "Mélite" many years afterwards, Corneille says: "This was my first trial. The comedy was far from being written according to rule, because I did not know then that any rules existed. My only guides were a little common-sense and the plays of the late Hardy, whose pen was more prolific than it was elegant."

Alexander Hardy was a most voluminous writer. He himself has said that he wrote five hundred plays. Tragedy, comedy, historical or pastoral, were all one to him. He joined and mingled everything as his fancy at the moment told him, ignoring every imaginable rule except that of pleasing his audience. He, at any rate, perceived that the important business of the dramatist was to write for the stage, and not for the reader. The reverse of this has ever been a fault common to the writers of French tragedy. Hardy had a wild and productive faculty of his own, inventing everything on the spur of the moment; and if he had been born a hundred years

later, say in 1660, he would in all probability have left good work behind him. He was a poor man, and was obliged to work for his daily bread. The remuneration then given to dramatic authors was very small. A playwright was hired by a troupe of actors to keep them supplied with new plays, and he was looked upon by them as one of the company. He followed them in all their peregrinations through the country, and was occasionally made to act the parts of kings and confidants in his own pieces. We learn from Scarron's novel, the 'Roman Comique,' that "the poet of the company" did not occupy a very dignified or a very enviable position. In all this we are reminded very much of what took place in regard to our own stage in the time of Queen Elizabeth. Du Ryer, a French author who lived at this time, was paid four francs for every hundred Alexandrine verses—or verses of twelve syllables—and two francs for every hundred verses of eight syllables; and there is no reason to think that Hardy was rewarded more bountifully. The author doubtless received his money irregularly. Sometimes payment was made to him upon one system, and sometimes upon another. The fixed plan of allowing him two parts out of the net profits of the receipts had not yet been introduced. An actress of the Hôtel de Bourgogne theatre spoke the feeling of the company very accurately when she said: "Monsieur Corneille has done us great harm. We formerly bought our pieces for three francs a-night. Everybody was accustomed to this arrangement, and we used to make money. Now, Monsieur Corneille's plays cost us a great deal, and we make very little." It would be difficult to determine whether the man who was paid four francs for every

hundred verses in his play, or he who got three francs every night his piece was performed, was in the worse condition. But it would seem that the successes of Corneille's early plays did help to make the condition of the dramatist more remunerative.

Our author's second play, also a comedy, was "Clitandre." It had been said that "Mélite" was wanting in interest. The public had hitherto been accustomed to complicated adventures, to extravagant situations, and to the broad jests with which authors and actors had endeavoured to please them; and the most enthusiastic part of the audience found themselves disappointed with a comedy which they thought poor and tame because an attempt had been made to imitate the manners of everyday life. Corneille, in this second play, attempted to retain the easy unaffected language which he had already adopted; but he employed in his plot—not altogether successfully—the complications and *imbroglios* to which Hardy and other writers had accustomed the audience. But from the first, Corneille undoubtedly did service in simplifying the language of the drama. Mairet, in one of his plays, makes a man say to his mistress, "Stay, my sun;" and she answers, "If I am a sun I ought never to stand still." Corneille would not have called a woman a sun for the sake of introducing so poor a joke.

Corneille printed his second comedy before his first, and in the preface alludes to the prejudice that then existed against authors printing their plays. He says that he had been advised not to print what he had written; but *naïvely* adds that other authors have had the same caution given to them, and have not followed it. Ronsard, Malherbe, and Théophile, he says,

thought but little of such advice. He, if he cannot follow them in their better qualities, will at any rate imitate their faults,—if it be a fault in him to print what he has written. The publication of a play in this way was, however, a less advantage to the author then than now; for readers were comparatively few, and many who delighted to listen had not yet learned to read fluently. Poets, as yet little accustomed to deal with the booksellers, found their compensation in society. The drawing-room poet was *fêted* and made much of, and in certain circles he was considered to be the lion of the hour. Flattery was a common coin amongst these verse-makers; as one man gave unto his neighbour, so did his neighbour give unto him. Corneille was then rising in the world; and we find prefixed to "La Veuve," his third comedy, no less than twenty-six sonnets or stanzas complimenting him upon the success and upon the beauty of his play. This was in the year 1633. In the year 1636, when "The Cid" came out, these neighbours, as we shall see presently, were not disposed to be so gracious towards him.

In "The Illusion" we find the Matamore, one of the characters of Spanish comedy, brought upon the French stage,—not indeed for the first time; but it may be well to show that Corneille used the character. The Spanish captain is the type of the empty swaggerer of whom Plautus and Terence were so fond, and who was so popular on our own stage in Parolles and Bobadil. The character seems to have died out in France after the middle of the seventeenth century. In all Molière's plays we do not find one example of the Matamore. Nor has the character remained popular with us.

Towards the end of "The Illusion" Corneille introduces a few lines with the object of showing that he is proud of writing for the stage. He remarks that the theatre is much more highly thought of now than it was before his time. All honest-minded people may go there and amuse themselves innocently. The king and his courtiers find it to be a most agreeable and instructive pastime.

Then, speaking more materially, he declares that, "if people are to be judged by their means, the theatre is not such a bad speculation." On one occasion when he was elated by his success, he coupled the name of another dramatic author with his own, and exclaimed: "Rotrou and I will make a living for the mountebanks." Much of the change, as he well knew, was due to himself. Before he began to write for the stage, the comedies of the time were often coarse and licentious; and though the amelioration probably did not take place suddenly, Corneille's good example was not without its effect upon his contemporaries. He was well thought of in high places, and was honoured by being counted as one of the five authors whom Richelieu enrolled in his service. A few words about these men will be said presently in speaking of "The Cid," the play that made Corneille's name so suddenly popular.

For many years Corneille lived at Rouen. He preferred the quiet of the town where he was born—then the capital of the province of Normandy—to the more busy life of Paris. Up to the great city he would go when the needs of his profession required it. He had been curious to see how "Mélite" would be received by the metropolitan audience; and when Mondory, the actor, determined to take his troupe to Paris, he accompanied

them. But until the year 1662, when he was nearly sixty years of age, his home was always at Rouen. There also lived at Rouen M. de Chalon, who had been an officer in the household of Marie de Medicis. He introduced himself to our author, and after a few preliminary compliments, said to him: "The kind of comedy that you have hitherto undertaken can only procure for you temporary credit. You will find in the Spanish dramatists some subjects which, if they are treated after our fashion, and by hands as competent as yours, would produce a great effect. You should learn their language. It is not difficult. I will teach you what I know of it; and until you can read by yourself, I will translate you some passages out of Guillen de Castro." Corneille profited by the advice, and rewarded his good-natured friend by writing "The Cid."

In "The Cid," as in other plays of the time, we find those high transcendental notions of chivalry which the French dramatists had copied from the romance-writers then in vogue. When these prose fictions had fallen into discredit by the ridicule cast upon them by Don Quixote, they were replaced by pastoral romances, heroic romances, and historical romances. For upwards of half a century in France, the novels of D'Urfée, Gomberville, Calprenède, Mademoiselle de Scudéry, and Madame de La Fayette, were read with the greatest avidity. To us who have grown accustomed to the more rapid movement and livelier action of modern fiction, these long romances are unpalatable; but during the first half of the seventeenth century, they were not only esteemed themselves, but had a predominating influence upon the dramatic literature of the time. The dramatists,

when they saw what the people liked, naturally followed in the same strain. Affectation, to use a vague but intelligible word, was the fault of the people as well as of the authors, and there were few writers completely free from it. Much of the language of soft and idle gallantry was copied by the dramatists from the novel-writers. Corneille and Racine, like other men, had at first to learn their lesson. They were only doing after the fashion of their time. Even Molière, who was always satirising the follies of the age, fell a victim to the prevailing style. His own heroic comedy, 'Don Garcie de Navarre,' abounds in passages of exaggerated tenderness and idle rhetoric. The grand folk who filled the boxes of the theatre liked to hear the lovers on the stage use the language which was employed in all the sentimental intercourse of their own coteries.

A word should be said as to the laws of the unities — those rules which the French dramatists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not very correctly, imagined were laid down by Aristotle, and which they adopted, hardly knowing why they did so, but with some preconceived idea that rules defining the purpose and aim of the drama would in themselves be valuable; and also, that laws of restraint preventing an author from incongruities, or from absurd complications in his story, would have a salutary effect on his play. The requirements were, that in every drama there should be a unity of time, a unity of place, and a unity of action. In other words, it was intended that the events in a play should all be comprised in twenty-four hours, that the scene of action should throughout virtually remain unchanged, and that the interest in the play should be con-

fined to one event, so that the mind of the spectator might not be diverted by extraneous matter. This last rule was the only one to which Aristotle gave much concern. "He attached no importance to the external unities of time and place. . . . The peculiarity of the Greek drama, in which a chorus remained constantly present and the curtain never fell, almost necessitated 'the unities;' but Aristotle only concerns himself with internal unity, which he says that Tragedy must have, in common with every other work of art, and which consists in making every part bear an organic relation to the whole, so that no part could be altered or omitted without the whole suffering."[1]

A slight acquaintance with French tragedy will show the baneful effect of these self-imposed laws. In Spain and in England the unities were disregarded; tragedy and comedy were largely mixed. Consequently the spectator was interested and amused. But by obedience to these rules, the imaginative powers of the writer are stifled, and the interest of the spectator or of the reader becomes mechanical. The author's ingenuity is exercised in leading his characters out of the labyrinth he has constructed, because it is forbidden to them to walk upon the grass. In England, at all events, we like walking upon the grass; and if we are not allowed to do so, walking to us ceases to have any charm.

In England and in Spain the dramatic poets followed no other guides but their own inspiration and public taste. This was not so in France, excepting in the early comedies and farces. From them, if popular will

[1] See the volume on Aristotle by Sir Alexander Grant in the "Ancient Classics for English Readers," pp. 96, 97.

had been allowed its way, a national drama might have been founded. Dating from the beginning of the second quarter in the seventeenth century, the dramatic writers in France were held bound to follow an official system of uniform laws, decreed and enforced by a wrong-headed and bigoted literary administration, made up of a few pedants who knew nothing of the requirements of the theatre, over which they had set themselves up as schoolmasters and as governors. The Chapelains, the Ménages, the Cotins, the Mairets, the D'Aubignacs, and others, did not understand Molière when he said to them,

"Je vous suis garant
Qu'un sot savant est sot plus qu'un sot ignorant."

But it was for them, and to one of them, that the remark was made.

The English reader of Corneille and of Racine will do well to divest himself, as far as he can, of all recollection of Shakespeare and his mode of engaging our attention. It is hardly possible to find a greater dissimilarity than that which exists between the method of our greatest poet and those of the dramatists we are now considering. As we read French tragedies, we can hardly persuade ourselves that "to hold the mirror up to nature" has been an object with the writer. He has rather endeavoured to surround his personages with a halo of glory, to invest them with an air of more than human nobility and sublimeness, and therefore to exceed what nature had intended. It is in this forced and unnatural state that they move, and act, and have their being. They are clothed with an air of unreality which they cannot shake off,

and which the reader or the spectator can rarely forget. If a young English student, possessing a fairly good knowledge of French for the purposes of reading, and also an acquaintance with any dozen of Shakespeare's plays, were to question himself, after reading six plays of Corneille and six plays of Racine, as to the main differences between the English and the French authors, the answer would be, that Shakespeare's personages are human beings, that they are men and women with a soul and a will of their own; while with Corneille and Racine—and with Corneille more especially—they are dressed up figures which always speak as from stilts and from behind masks. He would say to himself instinctively and unconsciously: "This is not humanity; men and women cannot act and talk in this way." In our English heroic dramas we see the same faults, the same unreality, because we have tried to make our men and women bigger and nobler than the life-size model. No man, even on the stage, is a hero simply because he calls himself a hero. The power of adjusting the characters and the situations to the focus through which they are seen is one of the nicest and severest tests which the dramatist has to undergo. The measuring of the *optique du théâtre* is a very important feature in the nature of his art. Unless such measurement is observed, it is almost impossible to give an air of truth to the scene, or to create in the mind of the spectator any lively sympathy with the actors.

If we feel a want of life in the personages of the play, we must also necessarily find it in the general dramatic action. With Corneille and with Racine we are conscious of the want of by-play. Both Shakespeare

and Molière felt instinctively the necessity of the addition of such work to their main plots. In their plays we are seldom wearied by long speeches which do not elucidate the character of the speaker, and which do not assist the action of the piece. In one of his essays Macaulay expresses his dislike to books of "Elegant Extracts," and adds, "It is not too much to say that the great plays of Shakespeare would lose less by being deprived of all the passages which are commonly called the fine passages, than those passages lose by being read separately from the play. This is perhaps the highest praise that can be given to a dramatist." It is not upon the "fine passages" that the action of a play depends, nor is it in the "fine passages" that it is mainly shown. If what Macaulay has said be true of Shakespeare, it is equally true of Molière. But with Corneille and with Racine we feel this to a very much less degree.

We have often cause to regret the conditions under which the authors of French tragedies wrote their plays. We regret the laws of the unities because of the air of dulness they impose upon the play, and because they debar the pleasing and perfectly natural fancies or illusions which every spectator or reader likes to create for himself. We miss also in French tragedy the admixture of the grave and gay sides of human life. Their writers looked upon the gravity of the situation as being so solemn and so serious that any idea of mirth would have been considered indecorous. Our friendly neighbours, when they first knew anything of Shakespeare, regarded him as a wild unkempt man, who, with a strong touch of genius, sorely wanted the amenities of civilised life to make his plays even tolerable. There was about

him, they fondly thought, an ignorance of the laws of dramatic art which gave to his tragedies an air of insupportable barbarity. The jestings of the grave-diggers in "Hamlet," and many of the speeches of Edgar in "King Lear," would, two hundred years ago in France, have been thought to be amusement fit only for savages.

When "The Cid" first came out in Paris at the end of the year 1636, it instantly made the reputation of Corneille. It was the first tragedy in the French language that had been popular. No former play had been received in France with so much enthusiasm, and no author had been welcomed with such exclamations. Corneille's earlier pieces had been approved by his fellow-dramatists,—men who for the most part were older than himself,—and they could afford to praise his early attempts. But when he outstripped them, the encouragement and the patronage that had been vouchsafed to him were exchanged for rancour and vituperation. Authors that before had greeted him kindly, now wrote libels on him. With the single exception of Rotrou, all the dramatists of the day looked upon him with envy because he had so stirred the hearts of the public that their own pieces were thought poor in comparison. Richelieu, the great Minister of the day, was himself desirous of literary reputation. In spite of the opinion of Guizot, it must be admitted that Richelieu was jealous of Corneille's fame, and that but for the feeling of jealousy, he would not have been so determined to subject "The Cid" to the rigour of the Academy's criticism. Richelieu's passion for the theatre was very strong. Could he have gratified his own ambition, he would have written for the stage himself. Being unable to

do this, he engaged others to write for him,—he choosing the subject of the plays, arranging the scenes, and occasionally putting in some detestable verses of his own. Five authors—Boisrobert, Colletet, Corneille himself, De l'Estoile, and Rotrou—were paid by him to write comedies and tragedies, each having one act allotted to him as his portion of the work. On one occasion, in the "Comédie des Tuileries," Corneille, who had the third act intrusted to him, took upon himself to deviate from the instructions he had received from his master. Richelieu became very angry, and told Corneille that he ought to have an "esprit de suite,"—meaning that he, like his colleagues, should be obedient to orders.

Any attempt to describe the quarrel which was thrust on the Academy by Richelieu in regard to "The Cid," would be too long for this little memoir. Corneille had written his play for the people, and by the people it was well received. Pellisson, the historian of the French Academy, has left us an account of how that institution was forced by the great Minister to give a written criticism on the play. What he says carries with it an air of truth, and his opinion may be accepted as trustworthy. The decision of the judges was upon the whole hostile to "The Cid,"—and was so, no doubt, in accordance with the Minister's wishes.

The next three tragedies of Corneille all appeared upon the stage in 1640. For rather more than three years no new play of his had come out, but he had not been inactive in the meanwhile. "Horace" was the first play after "The Cid," and this he dedicated to Richelieu—from motives of policy we may imagine—so as to flatter the vanity of the great man who had done

what he could to injure the success of his last tragedy. Corneille probably meant by his dedication to propitiate the great man and secure himself from other annoyances of the same kind. After "Horace," was played "Cinna;" and after "Cinna," "Polyeucte." Upon these four last-mentioned dramas, to which may be added "Le Menteur," the fame of Corneille now mainly rests. His early pieces—those written before "The Cid"—are forgotten, except by those who have made the early French stage an object of study; and so are also nearly all his tragedies written after the date of "Le Menteur." A few verses here and there may be remembered, and the catastrophe of "Rodogune" is a proof that the author's hand had not lost its cunning; but the general effect of Corneille's later tragedies is immeasurably below that of "The Cid," of "Horace," of "Cinna," and of "Polyeucte."

Molière is reported to have said that Corneille owed his happiest verses to a fairy who for a few years used to take compassion on him; the fairy would whisper a dozen or twenty verses into his ear, and then fly away: after a while the good-natured elf would fly back again, and not finding the work much advanced, would whisper a few more verses. Corneille is not the only author to whom the story of the fairy may be applied—who has written successfully for a time, and has then fallen off. His fairy certainly deserted him. Nevertheless he was a steadfastly laborious man, and was unaware that his kind friend had left him. He was obliged to work for his daily bread; but his mind was not so creative nor so rich in its productiveness as that of Molière, to whom we owe the story of the fairy. Nature had not endowed him so fully

as she had endowed the comic poet, and he had spent the most precious of her gifts before the half of his dramatic career was finished.

Corneille is eulogised by French writers generally more strongly even than Racine. We find some laudatory but not very eloquent words of Voltaire, to the effect that "France calls him The Great, not only to distinguish him from his brother, but also from the rest of mankind." Englishmen may admire him without being so enthusiastic in his praise. English readers would probably like him better if his style were less pompous. It has been said often enough, and with a certain amount of truth, that Corneille's language is such as to show us the chivalrous and high-spirited nobleman of the reign of Louis XIII. The French people had not as yet forgotten the religious civil wars at the end of the last century; the spirit of faction and of turmoil was still rife in the breast of every grand seigneur who could command and put himself at the head of a small body of men; the love of adventure, of intrigue, and of daring exploits, was strong throughout the country;—and these sentiments are said to have found expression in the tragedies of Corneille. His own contemporaries said of him, that he did not pay much attention to his style — that he was thinking more of the lessons he was intending to teach than of the language in which he taught them. However this may be, we are sure that Corneille thought much of the principles he was advocating. His heroines always act in stern accordance with their idea of duty. He was very apt to put long moral discourses into the mouths of his principal characters, weakening the action for the sake of the lesson

it was meant to teach. Doubtless Corneille is not singular in this practice. A comparison of "Cinna" with "Julius Cæsar" will at once show the difference, into which our space forbids us to enter. There is much fine poetry in "Cinna;" but all lively interest in the play is destroyed by the tedium of reading or listening to long declamatory arguments on State policy: and the faults of "Pompée" in this respect are still greater than those of "Cinna."

"Polyeucte" is perhaps, of all Corneille's plays, the most likely to find favour with English readers. The interest is wider than in "Horace," and of a more attractive character than in "The Cid." We see at the outset that the hero of the play is to become a convert to Christianity. His religious zeal, shown by his going into the pagan temple and breaking the heathen gods, was much condemned by the fashionable ladies at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, to whom Corneille read his tragedy before it was brought out on the theatre. It was the custom in those days for poets to read their poems in their friends' drawing-rooms. The great ladies would take a pride in inviting people to their houses to hear the authors of the day read their unpublished verses. We are told that Racine read his own verses remarkably well, but that Corneille's reading was far from graceful or impressive. He was by nature timid and awkward. His nephew, Fontenelle, who was very little inclined to speak disparagingly of his uncle, says that "his pronunciation was not quite distinct; he would read his lines with animation, but without any elegance."

The accounts that we find of Corneille's personal

appearance do not err upon the side of flattery. Vigneul-Marville, a contemporary, tells us that when first he saw the poet he took him for a shopkeeper. And the same writer says: "His conversation was so heavy that it soon became extremely wearisome. When his intimate friends, who would have wished him to be perfect in everything, told him of his slight defects, he used to smile and say, 'I am none the less Pierre Corneille.' He never spoke French correctly; perhaps he did not trouble himself about being scrupulously accurate." Of all the literary men of his time whose names have come down to us, Corneille had perhaps the most perfect appreciation of his own powers. He reminds us of the charming effrontery with which Horace sings his own praise—

"Exegi monumentum ære perennius."
"I have reared a monument more durable than brass."

Corneille says of himself, with almost equal boldness—

"Je ne dois qu'à moi seul toute ma renommée."
"To myself only I owe my whole renown."

He would occasionally say things of himself in a simple-minded, *naïve* way which caused his friends to smile at his innocence, and which made his detractors accuse him of faults which in truth were not his. He was a reserved and timid man, and was fully conscious of his own inability to talk easily and pleasantly in general society. It was because he was aware of the various conditions of his mind on different occasions that he wrote some verses on himself which may be thus roughly translated:—

"In the art of making love, how various is my skill!
I write it pretty well, but I make it very ill.
I have a facile pen, but a most unready tongue;
Gay enough upon the stage, at home I'm always wrong.
Few can listen to me long and not show that they are bored,
Till my sighings and my whisperings from other lips are heard."

Corneille wrote these lines about 1638, not long after the first appearance of "The Cid," and then locked them up in his cupboard. Many years later he began a letter to one of his friends by quoting them, and said: "Here is a little picture I made of myself twenty years ago; I am not worth much more now than I was then." As we look at his little picture, we are unconsciously, and somewhat strangely, reminded of our own well-loved Oliver Goldsmith. With his shyness and simplicity, Corneille was a proud man, and his spirit was at times high and haughty. Shortly after the publication of "The Cid," he published a short epistle in verse, which he called "Excuse à Ariste." This was probably meant as an answer to his critics. Whether his critics were or were not in the wrong, Corneille's reply was very injudicious, and brought down upon him the ridicule of men whose sense of honour was as much below his, as his own tragedy had been above their previous compositions.

In 1647, Corneille was chosen a member of the French Academy. He had already twice submitted his name for election, but on each occasion another candidate was preferred—nominally on the ground that he lived at Rouen, instead of in Paris. But in fact the Academicians were loath to choose as one of their associates a man

whose play they had only a few years since been forced to criticise, while the public voice spoke unanimously in its favour. Residence in Paris was no doubt considered desirable for every member, but it was not then so imperative as it has since become. Corneille's discourse, pronounced on the day of his reception, is hardly worthy of the author of "Polyeucte." We need not go into the charge brought against him for want of accuracy in his own language. We here in England are bound to presume that Corneille's French is good enough for us. The accusation has been made frequently, and notably by Voltaire. But there comes upon us a certain feeling of disappointment when we read the speech that a great literary man has made upon his entry into a great literary institution, and find it to be a confused jingle of words which we can hardly understand, and which we are driven to conclude were not clearly understood by their author. Corneille's oratorical defects were well known; and Frenchmen, when they have been obliged to speak of his Academical harangue, have congratulated him upon having made it very short. But in truth, Corneille's genius was irregular, and by no means omnipresent. He wrote poetry because he felt the fire burning within him. But when his fire had become exhausted, his poetry vanished with it. He long continued to write verses in which there was a sparkle every now and then, but the life and soul of the poet no longer showed itself. Even in his happier days he was hardly an accomplished literary craftsman. As has been said elsewhere, he endeavoured too frequently to be antithetical. Instead of smoothness and softness of expression, instead of a quiet and subdued force, we find that with him every-

thing moves by starts and sudden jerks. Spasmodic strength is never lasting; nor is enthusiasm, when caused by clamour, so long enduring as quieter manifestations, whether of joy, of passion, or of love. Such is the feeling that constantly occurs to us in reading Corneille's tragedies. We are made to imagine that we are listening to a man who wishes to throw a peculiar emphasis on to every word.

"Pertharite," first played in 1652 or in 1653, failed altogether; and then Corneille determined to give up writing for the stage. "Théodore," "Héraclius," "Andromède," "Don Sanche d'Aragon," and "Nicomède," his last five plays before "Pertharite," had all succeeded poorly; and the poet bethought himself that he would abandon his profession, and employ his time in going on with his translation of 'The Imitation of Jesus Christ.' The first part of this had appeared in the year 1651. In his preface to "Pertharite," he says: "It is better that I should take my leave of the theatre of my own free will than that I should be told to do so; and it is only fair to expect that after twenty years of work I should begin to perceive that I am getting too old to be still in demand. But I can carry away with me this feeling of satisfaction—that I leave the French theatre in a better state than that in which I found it, both on the side of art, and also on that of morals." He therefore made up his mind to devote himself to some work of piety that would at once profitably employ his time, and also clear his conscience before his spiritual confessor. In 1651 he had been appointed churchwarden in his parish of Saint-Sauveur at Rouen, and undoubtedly undertook this translation by way of a religious exercise. The

success of the first part induced him to go on and finish the work. The whole was published complete in 1656. The sale of the book at the time was very great. The first part was printed thirty-two times during the author's lifetime. Corneille was very proud of his good fortune. "I have heard him say," writes a contemporary, "that his 'Imitation' was more remunerative to him than the best of all his comedies." The word "comedy" is here synonymous with drama or theatrical play — we find it so used very constantly in the seventeenth century. But the poem is now very little read. There are altogether over 13,000 lines, and of these a dozen or twenty verses are occasionally given by way of quotation. Few persons probably attempt a more prolonged study of the work.

Corneille persisted for a few years in his resolution to write nothing more for the theatre; but at the instance of the Minister Fouquet, whom Corneille calls "the *surintendant* of letters no less than of finance," he determined to break through his resolve. Fouquet, by his liberality, induced the poet to resume his old avocations. He proposed to him three subjects for a new play. Corneille chose one of them, and wrote a tragedy which he called "Œdipe." He prefixed to it an epistle in verse, and addressed it to the Minister, thanking him for his good offices, and also for being the means of exciting him (Corneille) to abandon his former unprofitable determination. In this epistle Corneille alludes to his former dramas, and speaks also of what he is still able to do in terms of more self-sufficient praise than his readers were probably willing to allow to him.

There is, indeed, nothing in Corneille's later plays

that reminds us of his four celebrated tragedies, all of which were written and performed before the death of Louis XIII. His comedy, "Le Menteur," was also first played in 1642—the year of the death of the king and also of Richelieu. "Agésilas" and "Attila" are remembered only by Boileau's epigrams. After the satirist had seen the first of them, he wrote—

> "I have seen 'Agésilas'—
> Alas!"

And when the other play had been performed, he added—

> "But after 'Attila,'
> Holà."

There is a story, to which we can hardly give credence, to the effect that Corneille fondly imagined that Boileau had meant to speak well of this last tragedy. "Attila" was the first of Corneille's pieces put upon the stage of Molière at the Palais Royal Theatre; and we are surprised to find that Molière should have paid him what was then considered a large sum for the right of playing it upon his theatre,—such exclusive right lasting only until the piece should be printed. "Attila" was performed at the Palais Royal twenty times, and the average value of the receipts for each performance was only 375 francs, or little more than half of what was usually taken at the doors of that theatre. One is nevertheless obliged to think, either that the actors had not lost much money by the transaction, or that they saw their way to reimburse themselves by another play from the same pen; for Molière, as manager of the theatre, gave to Corneille the same sum—viz., 2000 livres—for his next piece, "Tite et Bérénice," as he had previously given for "Attila."

This last tragedy proved to be more remunerative than the former, for it was performed twenty-one times, and the average value of each day's receipt was 680 francs. But we find that for twenty-four representations of Molière's own comedy, "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," which was being performed at the Palais Royal Theatre concurrently with "Tite et Bérénice," the average daily receipt was over 1000 francs.

The "Tite et Bérénice" of Corneille was written by royal command. Henrietta, the daughter of Charles I. of England, who had married Philip, Duke of Orleans, a younger brother of Louis XIV., made known her desire both to Corneille and to Racine that they should each write a tragedy, taking as their subject the farewell parting of Titus and Berenice. History tells us that these two personages had loved each other; and we learn from writers on the French theatre that Henrietta wished to see the parting scenes of the two lovers represented on the stage, because she had herself in former days been much attached to her cousin Louis XIV. Her order was so conveyed to the two poets that neither of them knew that the other had received a similar command. But the princess did not live long enough to see either play performed upon the stage.

Up to the end of Corneille's life his high and independent spirit never left him. When he was writing for the theatre, and wished to make money by his plays, he was accused of avarice; but during the latter years of his life he was oppressed by poverty, and no reproach of dishonesty or of meanness was ever brought against him. In the seventeenth century the profession of authorship did not exist. It was thought by the fine gentlemen of

that time that it was derogatory to the dignity of the poet to wish to make money by his verses. The feeling was as common in England as in France. We are now wiser in such matters than were our ancestors; but even in the seventeenth century, Corneille, who had a wife and six children to support, thought he was not acting dishonourably in demanding that he should be paid for his work. We may imagine, too, that Molière, who also wrote for his bread, would not have given him more money for his two plays than he hoped to be able to make by them in return; and we may also be sure that Molière, who was a thorough man of the world, thought none the worse of Corneille because he wished to make a bargain that was profitable to himself. In the early days of his dramatic career, our author was spoken of, in conjunction with another fellow-dramatist, in terms that were then meant to be contemptuous, but which now make us smile by reason of their absurdity:—

> "Corneille is fine, but he sells his pages;
> Rotrou writes well, but he writes for wages."

It is nowadays the ambition of many hundreds of men in Europe to be able to live by their pen; but two centuries and a half ago, when knowledge had not been so widely extended, poetry and other literary compositions were thought to be wares too delicate and too precious for the public market.

"Suréna," the last of Corneille's plays, first appeared in 1674; and from that time until his death, ten years later, he published no other work for which he received remuneration. He had long been a poor man, but during these years his poverty must have been excessive. An

inhabitant of Rouen who had gone to visit our author in Paris wrote word to a correspondent:—

"I saw our friend yesterday: he is pretty well, considering his age. He begged me to remember him to you. We went out after dinner; and as we were going along the Rue de la Parcheminerie, he went into a shop to have a few stitches put into his boot. He sat down meanwhile on a plank, and I sat down beside him; and when the cobbler had mended the boot, Corneille gave him the three pieces of money he had in his pocket. As soon as we had returned to the house, I offered him my purse; but he would not accept it, nor any portion of it. I was truly grieved to see such a great man reduced to such a state of misery."

This happened about the year 1679. In the year previous, Corneille had written a letter to Colbert, asking that the pension which the king had graciously allowed to him as a man of letters, the payment of which had been discontinued, might be renewed. In 1663, Louis XIV. had declared his intention of allowing a certain sum of money annually out of the Civil List to those who honoured his reign by their writings. The unequal distributions made to the different authors seem to us now to be ridiculous enough. Corneille, however, was to receive 2000 francs, which, for some few years, were paid to him with more or less irregularity. The year was computed sometimes at twelve months and sometimes at fifteen; but the recipients of the royal bounty hardly dared to complain of any negligence on the part of the officers of the king's household. And in 1678, when Corneille wrote to Colbert asking for the renewal of his former pension, this money, which he plainly had a right to consider as part of his lawful income, and which in truth he so sorely needed, had been

withheld from him for the last four years. It is more than probable that Corneille was not the only man in such a position. In 1669 the total sum received by men of letters out of the royal purse was 111,550 livres; in 1675, six years later, it had fallen to 57,000 livres; and in 1690, to 11,966 livres! Boileau has frequently taunted Corneille with a love of money; but he most probably did not know to what extent money was needed by the old dramatist, for as soon as he heard of Corneille's letter to Colbert, he instantly went to the Minister and begged that his own pension might be given to his friend.

It would be useless to dwell upon the last days of Corneille's life. He was old, he was very poor, and he lived during the last few years of his life in a street in Paris, part of which has lately been pulled down to make way for the new Avenue de l'Opéra. He had taken up his abode in that quarter because it was a poor part of the town, and because house-rent there was cheap. His house was in the Rue d'Argenteuil, and had borne the number "18" for many years before it was pulled down. Here Pierre Corneille died, in the seventy-ninth year of his age. In the year 1824, the then owner of the house placed outside, over the gateway, a black marble tablet bearing the inscription: "The great Corneille died in this house on the 1st of October 1684." And at the end of the courtyard, facing the gateway, there stood a bust of the old poet, with his own bold but glorious words engraven upon it—

"Je ne dois qu'à moi seul toute ma renommée."

CHAPTER II.

LE CID.

In describing this tragedy of Corneille's, we shall have very little to do with the long Spanish poem, already well known to English readers by means of Southey's "Chronicle of the Cid." Southey has given us the story of the whole poem, but the action in Corneille's play virtually ends with the first chapter in that Chronicle. From Mr Ticknor's 'History of Spanish Literature,' we learn that "The Poem of the Cid" was composed hardly later than the year 1200, that it contains more than 3000 lines, and that its subject is taken from the adventures of the Cid, the great popular hero of the chivalrous ages in Spain. The poem is full of the national spirit of the country in which it was written, and has furnished almost innumerable popular ballads, which continued to be sung in the streets in Spain even after Corneille's play first made its appearance in France. Corneille took his drama from a play of Guillen de Castro, and Castro had partly borrowed his from one of the ballads then so much in vogue. We may fairly suppose that the Spanish play was superior as a drama to the French; for Corneille was bound down as with irons, by the

absurd law which required the action of his piece to be completed in twenty-four hours. Guillen de Castro, on the other hand, could do as his taste directed him. He was allowed to spread the events of his play over a reasonable space of time. He could tell his story as it seemed to him best, and he therefore ran less risk of shocking his audience by improbabilities.[1] Most English readers will feel that the conclusion of Corneille's "Cid" is unreal, unless the whole play is looked at in the light of a high-flown romance. Dr Johnson has defined romance, in its primary sense, to be "a military fable of the middle ages, a tale of wild adventures in love and chivalry." Such a definition will not inaptly apply to Corneille's play. Frenchmen are less prone than we are to exact that a story told for their amusement shall convey with it an air of truth, but they are more desirous to be amused; and for this end they will often consent that truthfulness of description or naturalness in the object represented shall be waived. The laws of the unities were devised with the idea of affording to the dramatic author a safeguard against improbabilities,—so that the personages should not be in different places at the same time,—so that long periods of time should not be comprised within the amusement of the same hour,—so that the events represented should be agreeable to each other. But while we admit that the laws of the unities may have been preserved in the writing of "The Cid," we feel none the less that our ideas of common-sense are often severely shaken.

Chimène, the daughter of Don Gomes, the Count de

[1] These objections have been pointed out by Mr Ticknor in his 'History of Spanish Literature,' vol. ii. p. 306, ed. 1863.

Gormas, is in love with Roderigo, the son of Don Diego, and she learns from her female attendant that her father approves of him, and is willing that he should become a suitor for his daughter's hand. The Infanta, the daughter of Ferdinand, the King of Castille, also loves Roderigo. He has charmed her by his prowess and by his deeds of gallantry. But as she is the daughter of the king, she will not demean herself by marrying a subject. It was through her that Roderigo and Chimène first became acquainted, and she will try and serve them by doing what she can to promote their marriage. The first two scenes of the play were for a long time suppressed whenever "The Cid" was performed in Paris; and when the curtain rose, the third scene was given as the first. Don Diego is an old soldier, who in his day has been a valiant warrior, but is now too infirm for active service; and Ferdinand, the king, has rewarded him by appointing him tutor to his son. The Count de Gormas meets Don Diego, and thus addresses him: "So! you have carried the day; the favour of the king has raised you to a rank which was due to me only." Don Diego replies with modest dignity: the mark of honour which he has received is a just reward of past services; yet to soothe his irritated rival, he is willing to allow that favour has had as much to do with it as merit. "But add another honour to that which has been done me," he says. "Let our houses be joined by a sacred tie. Roderigo loves Chimène: she is the dearest object of his affections. Accept him for her husband." This proposal, however, does not divert the Count's attention from his personal wrong. He enjoins the old man derisively to instruct the prince by example, to show

him how to pass whole days and nights in the field. "All this he will read in the history of my life," says Don Diego; upon which the Count's passion bursts forth:—

"Living examples are more powerful. A prince learns ill from a book. And what have you done after all, in your long years, that can be compared with one day of mine? If you were brave in your time, I am valiant now; my arm is the mainstay of the kingdom. Grenada and Arragon tremble at the glitter of my sword, and my name is the bulwark of all Castille. Without me other laws would now prevail, and your enemies would be your kings. Every day, every hour, to heighten my glory, adds laurel to laurel, and victory to victory."

The quarrel goes on more and more hotly, till De Gormas is transported with passion. "Rash dotard, thy impudence shall have its reward!" he cries, and with his glove strikes Don Diego on the cheek.[1] The old man passionately appeals to his assailant to take his life rather than insult him thus; but the Count swaggers off the scene with cruel derision, declaring that he will not forestall the Fates by a day or two. Don Diego's rage and shame then have vent in the following outburst:—

"O Rage, Despair! O Age, thou traitor-foe!
Have I not lived too long to bear a blow?
To see, grown grey in martial toils and fame,
So many laurels fade in one day's shame?

[1] In all the editions of "The Cid," from 1637 to 1644, the play was called a tragedy-comedy because of this blow. It was thought that in a tragedy such an indignity could not be tolerated. We need not be surprised to find the expression of this opinion repeated in Voltaire's "Commentary on Corneille."

My arm, so long by Spain in honour held—
My arm, that hath so oft the realm upheld,
So oft the king upon his throne sustained,
Now to betray my quarrel, leave me stained!
O cruel memory of my glories gone,
So many days thus by one day undone!
New dignity by which my peace is ta'en,
Precipice whence my honour fallen is slain,
Must my foe triumph in your light, while I
Disgraced must live, or unavenged must die?
Count, take my office: near my prince must be
In this high rank no man disgraced like me.
Thy jealous rage by such affront hast brought
To me unfitness, the king's choice to nought.
And thou, the instrument of glorious deeds,
Thou sword which icy age no longer needs,
Once dreaded, but which in this last offence
Hast been a thing of show, not of defence—
Go, leave the last and lowest of mankind,
And to avenge me better master find."

His son comes in, and he calls upon him to avenge the affront. Roderigo is struck to the heart by this demand. The insult must be washed out in blood; but it is the father of Chimène from whom this vengeance must be exacted. When his father leaves him alone on the stage, his anguish and doubt and misery pour forth with lyric vehemence. To give an idea of the measure and form of this soliloquy, we add a version which has been submitted to us by a friend, though, like all translations, it does scant justice to the original—

"Struck to the depths of my sad heart
By blow so unforeseen, a mortal thrust.
Avenger of a quarrel stern and just,
Victim of an unjust and deadly dart,

Silent I stand—my soul, in sad amaze,
Yields to the blow that slays.
So near, so near to recompense so tender.
O God, the wondrous pain!
My father's name insulted, and the offender
The father of Chimène.

What bitter strife within me burns!
Against my honour my affections move.
I must avenge my sire—and lose my love.
One stirs my soul, my arm the other turns.
Oh bound to such sad choice!—*her* heart to break,
Or bear shame for her sake.
On either side my woe is infinite.
O God, the bitter pain!
Accept the insult, and refrain to slay
The father of Chimène.

My father—my betrothed; honour or love.
O noble tyranny, O high constraint!
My pleasures all are dead, my glories faint.
Unworthy or unhappy I must prove.
What dear and cruel hope dost thou discover
To generous son and lover,
O noble enemy of all my joy,
Sword that bring'st nought but pain!
To 'venge my sire must I thy blade employ,
And lose by thee Chimène?"

The self-argument ends in Roderigo's determination to do his duty to the honour of the house, since Chimène herself would despise him did he submit to insult for her sake.

In the first scene of the second act, Don Arias, a Castilian gentleman and a courtier, is sent to the Count by the king, with a royal command to the offender that he

should apologise to Don Diego for the insult offered to him. The Count acknowledges that he has been in fault, but will make no apology; he flatters himself that his past services to the country will more than cover his one act of disobedience to the royal commands.

There were points in this, difficult to be explained now, which aroused the anger of Richelieu, the Minister. He was adverse to duelling, and he was specially intolerant of Spanish pride. This feeling was so strong that the poet was obliged to omit four of his own lines.

Roderigo then enters suddenly, and at once defies the insulter of his father. The Count at first treats him carelessly and with contempt; but by-and-by acknowledges the justice of the challenge, and shows a generous appreciation of the young man's courage and devotion. "Are you weary of life?" he asks. "Are you afraid to die?" Roderigo promptly rejoins; and they go out together, with a certain mutual respect, to the inevitable duel. "You do your duty," says the father of Chimène. "Degenerate is the son who will outlive his father's honour." In the meantime, Chimène has heard of the quarrel between her father and her lover, and awaits in despair the event which in any case must be fatal to her happiness.

The final scenes of this act take place at court, where Ferdinand, the king, hears with displeasure that the Count will not obey his commands, but has instead resolved to fight with Roderigo—will not listen to Don Sancho, who pleads for the absent. Then he tells Don Arias that news has reached him that the Moors, his old enemies, are again about to attack him. Their ships have been seen at the mouth of the Guadalquivir: and

though there is no immediate danger, necessary precautions should be taken.

Corneille saw the inconvenience of placing the scene in Seville, when all the personages of his play belong to the province of Castille. He tries to excuse himself in his "Examen:" "I have placed the scene in Seville, though Don Ferdinand the king was never master there; and I have been obliged to make this wrong statement to give some appearance of probability to the inroad of the Moors, whose army could not travel so quickly by land as by water."

The scene is interrupted by Don Alonso, another gentleman of the court, who comes to say that the Count de Gormas is dead, and is speedily followed by Chimène appealing to the king for justice, and by Don Diego eager to defend his son. Roderigo, Chimène cries, has killed her father, and must give his life for the life he has taken; but Don Diego at the same time supplicates the king to spare his boy, who did no more than what was right in avenging his father's honour:—

"*Don Diego.* Sire, these locks, grown grey under harness; this blood, so often lavished in your cause; this arm, once the terror of the enemy;—these would have gone down covered with infamy to the grave, had I not possessed a son worthy to bear his father's name,—a son worthy of his country and worthy of his king. He has lent me his strength; he has killed the Count: he has given me back my honour, and wiped out my shame. If courage, and just indignation, and vengeance for an insult, deserve chastisement, then upon me alone the storm should fall. The head must suffer for the arm. Of the glorious crime which causes this question, I, Sire, am the head; he is but the arm. If Chimène bewails that he has killed her father, could I have done it, he would

have been innocent. Sacrifice, then, the head which old age will shortly take away, but preserve the arm that may one day serve you. Take my blood to satisfy Chimène. I do not resist; I consent to my fate. And far from murmuring against the rigour of the law, I shall die without sorrow, since I die without shame."

This fine defence concludes the act. The king replies with equal dignity: "My court and my word shall be Don Diego's prison," and ordering Roderigo to be brought before him, refers the settlement of the question to a council of State.

The third act begins in the house of Chimène, where Roderigo, suddenly entering, is met by Elvire, her companion and confidante. Indignant and horrified to see him in the house which he has made desolate, she demands what he does there, how he dares to appear in this place of mourning? Roderigo is desperate: he comes to give up his life for the life he has taken. "My judge is love — my judge is my Chimène," he cries; but he consents to conceal himself at the entreaty of Elvire. When Roderigo retires, Don Sancho, his rival, enters with Chimène, claiming the right to avenge her father. She gives him but a very doubtful answer; and when she is left with her confidante, she breaks out into a flood of tears. Her position is a cruel one, for she is compelled to seek the death of the man whom she loves. The conflict between love and honour is as bitter, in her case, as was that of Roderigo before. Her conclusion, however, is like his, that honour must be maintained at all costs. "I must pursue him, destroy him, and die with him," she cries.

Suddenly Roderigo stands before her. "It is needless to pursue, I am here," he says, and offers his sword

that she may avenge herself. She answers with a cry of horror. The scene is full of passion and force. Chimène rejects the sword which has shed her father's blood. "Plunge it in mine, and that will wash out the stain," says Roderigo: then follow the explanations of their mutual misery. His life is now in her hands, and he implores her to take it. He has incurred her just wrath, but he could not have lived to hear her reproach him as worthless and a coward. To this she replies in a similar strain of generosity:—

"Ah, Roderigo, though thy foe I be,
I blame thee not to have fled this infamy;
And howsoe'er my misery outward flows,
Without accusing thee I weep my woes.
I know for such a wrong what cruel art
Honour demands from every generous heart.
Thou hast done only what the brave must do,
But in the act I learn my part from you:
Thy fatal valour and sad victory show
What to my father and my house I owe.
Mine the same care: bound for my misery
T' avenge my sire, and win my fame in thee.
Alas! thy part in this is my despair.
Had I from other hand such woe to bear,
My soul had found in thee the sole relief,
The only solace for her bitter grief.
What help, what strength in sorrow's evil day
If thy dear hand had wiped my tears away!
. . . . .
But think not in my heart that love has room
With coward thoughts to save thee from thy doom.
Although affection fain would break thy bonds,
My courage, generous too, to thine responds.
Thou prov'st thee worthy me in wounding me;
And by thy death I'll prove me worthy thee."

When, however, Roderigo insists that she should herself take vengeance upon him, she turns with horror from the suggestion:—

"*Roderigo.* Do not borrow another arm, O my Chimène! believe me, this is not a fit return. My arm alone avenged my offence; thy hand alone should take vengeance for thine.

Chimène. Cruel! why torture me with this persistence? You avenged yourself without aid, but you would help me to my vengeance. No, I will follow your example; I have too much courage to share my glory with thee.

Rod. Can I not obtain this last favour? For the sake of your dead father, for the sake of our love, strike me, for vengeance or for pity!

Chim. Go! I do not hate you.

Rod. But I deserve your hatred.

Chim. Go! I cannot give it.

Rod. Do you care so little for blame and public reproach? When it is known that you love me still, what will envy and malice say? Silence them, and slay me for your good fame.

Chim. My good fame shall shine the brighter that I let thee live. The blackest envy will applaud me and lament my sorrows when they see that I adore thee, yet pursue thee.

Rod. Let me die!

Chim. Go! go!

Rod. What purpose is in thy mind?

Chim. To avenge my father in spite of our love. But notwithstanding the rigour of this cruel duty, my only hope is to fail in it.

Rod. O miracle of love!

Chim. O crown of misery!"

She urges him to make his escape without being seen; and as he is going out, she vows to him that if she obtain his death-warrant she will not survive him.

The next scene introduces Don Diego in search of his son. He has wandered everywhere looking for him, and has just concluded that he must be dead or in prison when he sees him approaching. To his joy Roderigo replies only by sighs, but the old man has a hope to communicate. He tells his son that the Moors are now, at this very moment, preparing to attack the town of Seville. They are sailing up the river; they have the darkness of the night and the tide in their favour, and they will very shortly have reached the fortified walls. Don Diego has collected five hundred men to avenge his son; but they will be better employed, he allows, in saving their country. He urges Roderigo to put himself at once at their head.

"Take then th' occasion! with this chosen band
Let the king owe his safety to thy hand,
Even to thy loss; but rather laurel-crowned
Come back! thy fame not to mere vengeance bound,
But proved by victory: thus by valour gain
From the king pardon, silence from Chimène.
And if you love her still, the only way
To win her back is victory in this fray.
Time is too precious to be lost in speech.
Not a word! I would have thee fly this end to reach.
Quick, follow me! go, fight! let the king see
More than he lost in Gomes lives in thee!"

The next day, — we must suppose it to be the next morning, if the play is to be finished in the twenty-four hours, according to rule,—the news is spread everywhere about the town that Roderigo has with his five hundred men completely vanquished the Moors and taken two kings prisoners. Chimène hears this from her confi-

dante; she anxiously asks if Roderigo is wounded, but her next thought is to harden her heart towards her lover. She says to herself: "Keep silent, love, and let anger take its course. Though he may have conquered two kings, he has killed my father." Then the Infanta — who herself, as the reader will remember, loves Roderigo—comes to Chimène, and endeavours to persuade her to cease her demand for Roderigo's life. But Chimène is inexorable. The Infanta tries all that persuasion can do. She tells the unhappy girl that yesterday every one was admiring her courage in sacrificing one who was so dear to her; but now things are changed. Roderigo is at this moment the chief warrior in the kingdom. He is the main support of Castille, and the terror of the Moors.

"What! to avenge a father, must we throw
Our country open to the public foe?
Is thy pursuit hot 'gainst us too? Must we
Be punished in him, though from guilt most free?
To wed the man well may your heart refuse,
Whom of your father's death you must accuse:
I would not have you do it for my part.
But let him live though he must lose thy heart.
This loss is his sore punishment, believe;
For no more bitter pain his soul can grieve.
Your country's welfare bids you pause before
His life: think you the king will grant you more?

CHIMÈNE.

He may refuse, but I cannot refrain."

In the next scene the king comes in and thanks Roderigo for his valiant services. But the thanks go no further than words. Ferdinand tells him that he

cannot reward him as he deserves, and that the two Moorish kings whom he took prisoners must be his recompense. They have called him their "Cid," which, in their language, means their lord or their master; and the king ordains that by such title Roderigo shall henceforward be always known. Roderigo replies that he has but done his duty to his king and his country; and then, at Ferdinand's request, he relates at considerable length his victory over the Moors. This speech of Roderigo's (act iv. scene 3) is full of spirit and noble ardour.

Chimène again comes to demand justice of the king. Roderigo retires behind the scene; and Don Diego, his father, whispers to the king that Chimène in fact wishes to save his son's life. Then, to put her to the test, the king makes believe that Roderigo, though he had gained his victory over the Moors, was slain in battle. Chimène is near to fainting on hearing of Roderigo's death; but when the king undeceives her, she becomes as loud as ever in her demand for retribution. That he should fall honourably on the field of battle was not what she wished for. He would then have escaped her vengeance. He should be made to die upon the scaffold, and his name should bear the stain of dishonour. Had he died for his country, his fate would have been an enviable one; such a death would, in the minds of men, have made his name immortal. The king tries to calm her. "Examine your own heart," he says: "you will find that you love Roderigo, and that you are inwardly praying that his life may be spared." Chimène, however, holds out sternly. Relying on the observance of an old custom, she appeals to the king's courtiers, and

promises to give herself to whoever will fight Roderigo and bring her his head as a proof that he has been duly punished for his crime. Don Sancho accepts the offer, and she consents to abide by the issue. The king allows the duel, and tells Don Arias to act as judge between the combatants.

At the beginning of the fifth act there is a further scene between Roderigo and Chimène. Roderigo has come to say farewell to his mistress. He maintains that he has not lost his courage, that his vigour is not abated, nor does his fame shine less brightly. After his past exploits, he need fear nothing. He thinks he may die now without being accused of cowardice, without being thought to be a prisoner, and without ever having acknowledged a captor's power. Men will say of him—

"His fate was this, that he adored Chimène;
He would not live to bear her hate and blame:
Himself he yielded to the bitter fate
Which made her seek his blood, who was his mate.
His head she asked: magnanimous, his heart
Thought it a crime to hold back any part.
T' avenge his honour, love he laid aside,
And to avenge that dearest love he died,—
Preferring, though with hopes his heart was rife,
His honour to Chimène, her to his life."

He is about to die, for he has no heart to fight against one whom she has commanded to take up arms in her defence. On the other hand, Chimène, whom we have hitherto always seen weeping and wailing, bids him to take courage. She tells him plainly that she loves him, and begs him to save her from the embraces of Don Sancho. "Go and fight," she says; "and if you still

would gain my hand, come back the conqueror in a quarrel of which I am to be the reward."

After a short delay Don Sancho comes to bring her his sword. She instantly exclaims, "What! soiled with the stain of Roderigo's blood. How dare you come before me? How dare you show yourself to me after having taken from me that which upon earth I cherished most?" He endeavours to explain, but she continues: "Why do you speak to me, hateful murderer of my dearest idol? Such a valiant warrior could not have fallen before such an adversary! You need hope for nothing from me. You have not served me. Instead of avenging me, you have taken away my life." And when the king arrives attended by his suite, she declares openly that she loved Roderigo, but that, in spite of her love, she used all her efforts to avenge her father's death. Her vengeance is now satisfied, and she begs to be allowed to go into a convent, and there to pass the rest of her days.

Don Sancho tells the king that it was he who had been disarmed by Roderigo, and that, according to Roderigo's command, he had gone to Chimène to lay his sword at her feet. He congratulates himself upon having encountered such a generous opponent, and he expresses a hope that his conqueror may obtain possession of his lawful prize. Chimène is still doubtful whether she ought to accept the hand of a man who had so lately killed her father; but the king advises her to take a year to think about it. She may then give herself to Roderigo without fear of shame. Roderigo is ordered to go and defeat the Moors a second time. He is made to believe that when he returns Chimène will have overcome her scru-

ples of conscience, and will then marry him without delay. As she says nothing in reply, we may construe her silence as implying her consent.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that "The Cid" cannot rightly be called a tragedy, since everything ends happily. There was a death in the early part of the play, but the sorrow consequent upon that is wiped out by the consent to a future marriage.

CHAPTER III.

HORACE.

THE story of this play is taken from the legend of the battle between the Horatii and the Curiatii. In the reign of Tullus Hostilius, the third King of Rome, there were constant quarrels and plunderings between the Romans and the people of Alba, a town in Latium. Neither side would give way to the other, and war was declared between them. Each party had made active preparations for the struggle; and our play opens as the two armies are ready to be drawn up on the field. There is much lamentation heard both in Alba and in Rome, for the two peoples had long been friends. Marriages had been common between them, and it was felt that great misery and desolation were at hand.

The first two scenes are taken up with plaints and wailings; for whichever side gain the victory, the result will be disastrous to the personages of the story. Sabina, an Alban woman by birth, but married to Horatius, a Roman, thus bitterly laments her fate:—

"I am Roman, alas! because Horatius is Roman; I received the title when I accepted his hand. But this tie would make me a slave indeed, if it shut out from my

heart my own country. Alba, where I first saw the light of day—Alba, my first love, the place of my birth,—when I see war break out between us and thee, I dread our victory, even as I dread our loss. And Rome, if thou upbraid'st me that I am treacherous to thy cause, let thy enemies be such as I can hate. When I see from thy walls their army and ours—my husband on this side, and my three brothers on that—how can I without impiety importune heaven for thy happiness?"

Sabina would pray earnestly that Rome might be successful in every quarter of the world, except against her own native town. And still addressing Rome, she continues—

"Go push your successes in the East; go to the Rhine, and set your flag up on its banks. Let the columns of Hercules tremble at thy approach: but spare the town where Romulus was born. Recollect, ungrateful city, that thou owest thine own existence, thy walls, and thy first laws, to the blood of her kings. Alba is thy origin. Stay, therefore, and consider before thou drive thy sword into thy mother's breast."

To whichever side the victory falls, the defeat to her will be terrible. The conquerors will have no further obstacle to their ambition, and the vanquished will be without hope; and as for the unhappy Sabina, she will have only tears for the conquered, and for the conquerors hatred.

When she leaves the stage, Camilla, the sister of Horatius, appears in her place. Julia, a Roman lady, is the confidante both of Sabina and of Camilla, and to her ear their pathetic lamentations on either side are addressed. Camilla, as well as Sabina, is in despair at the thought of the coming war. She, a daughter of

Rome, is betrothed to Curiatius, one of the noblest sons of Alba; and her position is identical with that of Sabina, except that she is not yet actually married. Her three brothers are all in the Roman army, fighting against Alba, as the three brothers of Sabina are in the Alban army. Julia tells Camilla that her grief ought not to be so deep as that of Sabina, for she is not as yet married. "One may change one's lover," she says, "but not one's husband. Put Curiatius out of your mind, and think of Valerius. You will then have nothing to fear from the enemy. You will be altogether upon our side, and no longer troubled by anxious cares." The idea of breaking her faith with a man she loves is horrible to Camilla; she will not listen to it for a moment. She had loved Curiatius, and had promised herself to him on the day when his sister Sabina was married to Horatius, her brother. The quarrel between Rome and Alba, which had since broken out into open war, had begun after their betrothal. Camilla and her lover then parted, each sore at heart, and she had gone to the oracle to inquire what her fate was to be. The oracle assured her that there would be a change to-morrow in the affairs of Alba and of Rome; that there would soon be peace; that her prayers had been heard; and that she should be united to Curiatius, so that they never should again be parted. Camilla, still telling her story to her confidante, describes her joy, and how in her joy she had met with her Roman lover, Valerius; but moved to ecstasy by the oracle, had scarcely known that it was another, and not Curiatius, who spoke to her of love.

"I met Valerius, and, against his wont, he displeased me not. He spoke to me of love; and I listened to him, not

perceiving that it was he who spoke. I showed him neither coldness nor disdain. Curiatius seemed to stand before me. All that I heard told me of his love, and all that I said assured him of mine. But to-day everything hangs upon the hazards of the fight. When yesterday I learnt the news, I scarcely noted it: my heart, charmed with the thoughts of wedlock and of peace, cast off all fatal forebodings. Night has dispelled that sweet delusion; a thousand horrid visions, a thousand images of blood, or rather a thousand heaps of carnage and of slaughter, tore from me my joy, and brought back my fears. I saw blood, and the dead, and nothing more; each spectre, as it came before me, remained but for a moment. They crowded in one upon the other, and the confusion added a double terror to my dream."

After this description, Curiatius suddenly appears, and speaks to Camilla enigmatically of peace which is to be purchased by an expedient heretofore unthought of. He describes to her how two contending armies had been marshalled into position facing each other, ready for the signal of attack, when the Alban dictator came forward between them, and proposed terms. The dictator described the misery that must follow a war in which members of the same family would be fighting against each other. Their common enemies, he says, are looking with satisfaction at the discord between them. Why should they weaken their forces by a civil war, in which the slaughter of the conquered would only weaken the conquerors? But if they must fight amongst themselves, let certain champions on each side be chosen, and let the issue be decided by them. The side which is proved to be weakest shall henceforward yield to the strongest. But no indignity shall be imposed; slavery shall not be inflicted; nor shall tribute be exacted. Curiatius tells Cam-

illa that when the dictator had spoken, each party rushed into the other's arms with many signs of joy. It was then determined to select three men from each side. The choice had not yet been made; but in two hours' time the chosen warriors should be prepared to fight.

At the commencement of the second act we learn that Horatius and his two brothers have been chosen on the side of Rome. Horatius and Curiatius appear on the stage together, and after a scene of mutual compliments, Flavianus, a soldier in the Alban army, comes in to announce that Curiatius and his two brothers have been chosen to fight on the side of Alba. He takes his leave, and the two chosen warriors are again left alone together. Here we have one of the scenes which Corneille loved to describe: the struggle between love and family affection on the one side, and honour and duty on the other. All the three tragedies now under our notice contain remarkable instances of this. The situation, however, of the two families here described is almost unequalled in affording scope for all the painful questions involved in such a conflict. There is a moment in which the two champions stand aghast, as if a gulf had suddenly opened between them. Then Curiatius gives vent to the first wild horror of dismay in broken exclamations which finely express the confusion of a mind suddenly overwhelmed by a terrible and unalterable fate. "From this time forth let heaven, and hell, and earth unite their rage against us! Let men, gods, demons, and fate herself, combine to do their worst. Their utmost cruelty, their most dread enmity, are less terrible than the honour thus vouchsafed us."

Horatius is more self-possessed. He reminds his

friend that the distinction is one of which they ought to be proud. But Curiatius continues:—

"True it is that our names can never die; the opportunity is noble, and we should cherish it. We shall be mirrors of a rare virtue: but yet your heroism has something savage in it; few even of the noblest would wish to seek immortality by such a path. However dear we hold this bubble reputation, obscurity is better than such honour. As for me, I dare to say, and you can testify, that I have never hesitated to follow my duty. Not our friendship, our love, or the ties that bind us, could for a moment make my mind waver. And as Alba shows by this choice that she holds us in as high esteem as Rome holds you, so shall I fight for her as you for Rome: my heart is as stout as yours. But I still am human. I see that your honour demands of me my blood: I see that mine requires your death. Betrothed to the sister, I must kill the brother; so hard a fate must we encounter for our country's sake. Still, though I fly fearless to accomplish my duty, my heart recoils from it, and I shudder with horror. I mourn my lot, and look with envy on those whom battle has already bereft of life; yet without any wish to draw back. This great and sad honour touches my heart, but changes me not. I hold dear what it gives, but mourn for what it takes away. If Rome asks a higher virtue, I thank the gods that I am no Roman, that I am still permitted to feel as a man."

Horatius answers him:—

"If you are no Roman, show yourself worthy to be one: if you are my equal, prove it. The unshrinking courage of which I boast admits no weakness. It is not fit that honour should look behind her as she enters the lists. Great is our misfortune—none can be greater; but I face it, and do not tremble. Let my country send me against whom she will, with joy I blindly accept the post offered to me: the glory of receiving such a trust should stifle all other sentiments. He who, setting out in his country's service, thinks of aught

else, is ill prepared to do his duty; this hallowed and sacred law breaks every other tie. Rome has made choice of my arm; that is enough for me. As with full and sincere gladness I married the sister, so do I combat the brother. But enough of futile speech; Alba has chosen you—I know you no more.

Curiatius. Alas! I know you still, and this thought it is that kills me: it is your harsh virtue alone that is unknown to me."

This is one of the passages which Voltaire, in his 'Commentaries on Corneille,' extols as worthy of the highest admiration. He says—

"At these words, 'Je ne vous connais plus'—'je vous connais encore,' the audience burst out into applause; nothing so sublime had ever been seen. There is not in Longinus a single instance of equal grandeur. It is lines such as these which have given to Corneille the title of great, not only to distinguish him from his brother, but also from the rest of mankind. A scene such as the above will excuse a thousand faults."

Camilla then enters, and Horatius endeavours to embolden her:—

"Arm yourself with courage, and prove yourself my sister. If I fall by your lover's hand, receive him not as your brother's murderer, but as a man of honour who has done his duty, who has served his country, and proved himself worthy of you. Fulfil your marriage vows as though I were yet alive. But if it be my sword that cuts short his life, receive me victorious in the same spirit, and do not reproach me for your lover's death."

When Camilla is left alone with her lover, she tries to soften his heart, and entreats him to abandon this fearful contest. He has already, she says, done enough for his country. No name is more illustrious than his,

and no fresh laurels can add to his glory. If he will remain with her she will not despise him, but will love him the more, because he has been untrue to his country for her sake. The argument is very touching, and brings out the tenderer character of Curiatius, who would fain pretend to be false to his love in order to estrange her if possible from him. But though his heart revolts as much as hers from the terrible strife, not all her entreaties can persuade him to sacrifice his honour by refusing to fight for his country. Alba has committed her fate into his hands, and he must render her an account of his deeds: he must live without reproach, or else die without shame.

This tragic discussion is then varied by the re-entrance of Horatius accompanied by his wife Sabina. "What!" cried Curiatus, "is not Camilla enough to distract my heart? must you too join your tears to hers, my sister?" But Sabina's despair is beyond tears or entreaties. She has but one wild prayer to make to the combatants. If either one or the other shrank from this glorious misery she would disown them as brother or as husband: the expedient she suggests to make their fight less unnatural is the very utterance of despair. "Buy by my death the right to hate each other," she cries. "Alba so wills it, and Rome: they must be obeyed." She is the only link between them. Let one of them kill her, and the other avenge her death. After this there will be nothing strange in their conflict; they will be each other's natural enemies.

Sabina's impassioned appeal brings the terrible situation to its climax: distracted love and misery can go no further. It was probably Corneille's intention in this

to contrast with Camilla's entreaties, in which there was a kind of hope, the despair of the wife who saw no issue from the terrible dilemma.

This scene is interrupted by the sudden entrance of the old Horatius. The two heroes had been almost overwhelmed by the appeals of the women. "My wife!" "My sister!" they exclaimed, touched to the heart. "Courage! they are melting," cries poor Camilla; when the father's entrance ends all her hopes.

"*The elder Horatius.* What is this, my sons? Talk you of love? lose you still your time with women? It is yours to shed your blood, not to think of their tears. Fly! leave them to bewail their miseries. Their plaints have too much power over you, they will make you weak as themselves. Such blows can only be escaped by flight."

The six warriors then prepare themselves for the combat; but as they are standing ready to fight, the people, horrified by the terrible character of the conflict, interpose to prevent it. Tullus Hostilius, the king, appeases their sudden excitement by ordering the champions to lay down their arms until the oracles have been consulted. But this delay only prolongs the sufferings of the unhappy women, through whose hopes and fears the story is here carried on, and who are imprisoned in their house lest they should interrupt the fray.

At length the old Horatius brings them the news that the gods have declined to stay the battle, and that their brothers are at that moment fighting. In the next scene Julia enters to announce that Rome has been beaten. The three Curiatii are yet alive; two of the Horatii have been killed, and the survivor, Sabina's husband, has saved himself by flight. The old Horatius

will not at first believe that his son should have turned his back on the enemy. Julia knows nothing further, for her heart failed her when Horatius took flight. The old man does not heed her last sentence, and exclaims, "Did not our soldiers tear him in pieces? Did they admit the coward into their ranks?" Camilla's cry of sorrow here breaks in, and is arrested by the stern despair of the father:—

CAMILLA.

My brothers!

THE OLD HORATIUS.

Weep them not, weep them not all!
As two have fallen, their sire would proudly fall.
Let noblest garlands deck their funeral stones,
The glory of their death for all atones.
This joy their souls unconquered have possessed,
That while they lived, Rome was with freedom blessed;
Ne'er have they seen a foreign prince obeyed,
Nor their imperial land a province made.
But weep the other! weep the fatal stain
Thrown by his shameful flight upon our fame;
Weep the dishonour of our house renowned,
Th' eternal shame on each Horatius bound.

JULIA.

What would you he had done 'gainst such odds?

THE OLD HORATIUS.

Die!
Or on sublime despair for aid rely.
Had he a moment longer held the field,
A moment less Rome had been forced to yield,
And honour on my hoary head retained,
By his life's payment, had been nobly gained.

Yet must he reckon for his blood with Rome:
Each drop that's spared takes glory from his home;
Each instant that he lives after this crime,
Prolongs his shame, and with his infamy mine.
My hand must stop his course; a father's rage,
Using 'gainst worthless son the rights of age,
Must prove, by the prompt vengeance of his shame,
How such a deed is alien to my name.[1]

Sabina tries to console her father-in-law, but he will listen to no words of comfort, upbraiding her rather that as her brothers and her husband all live, she has no share in his misery. The next act begins with Camilla's equally vain intercessions for her brother, when Valerius enters, sent by the king to the old Horatius to express sympathy for his sorrow. The real end of the combat is then for the first time revealed. It becomes gradually evident that Julia had not seen the end of the battle. The old Horatius perceives there is something he does not understand, and when Valerius tells him that he has only heard one half of the story, he brightens up suddenly and exclaims, "What! Rome is then triumphant?" Valerius then relates to him the complete circumstances of the battle. Horatius was altogether unhurt though his two brothers were killed; while his three opponents were all wounded. He had fled from them, so that they might not all attack him at once, and had thus been enabled to encounter them single-handed. In this manner he had obtained an easy victory. At hearing this the old man's joy is excessive. Valerius further tells him that Tullus will shortly send his son to him, and that

[1] For this translation I am indebted to the kind assistance of a friend.

the king has determined to celebrate the victory by a public festival upon the following day.

When Valerius withdraws, the old Horatius exhorts his daughter to patience. Rome, he says, has gained a great victory, and she ought not to allow her private misfortunes to damp the joy which she should feel at the success of Rome. After such a victory there will be no Roman who would not be proud to win the hand of the sister of the deliverer of their country; and he implores her to show her brother when he returns that they are both of the same blood. But Camilla's misery is not to be vanquished so easily. It is not enough, she moans, that her lover is killed, and that his rival has brought the news, but she is expected in addition to kiss the hand that has pierced his heart. When Horatius enters with his squire bearing the swords of the three Curiatii, her misery bursts forth without bounds :—

"Restore my Curiatius or leave me to weep: my joy and my sorrow depend on his lot: I adored him living, and I mourn him dead. Think not to find your sister as you left her. You now see in me only an injured woman who will track your steps like a fury, and at every instant reproach you with his death. Tiger, thirsting for blood, that forbidd'st my tears, and would have me rejoice in his death and sound thy praises to the skies, thus slaying him a second time!—may so many misfortunes accompany thy life that thou mayst envy even me."

Horatius, amazed, reproaches her with being unfaithful to Rome, on which Camilla bursts forth into impassioned denunciation of the cruel city: "Rome, where you were born and which you worship,—Rome, which I hate because she honours you!" She prays that all nations

from the East and from the West may rise up against her :—

"May the anger of heaven, lighted by my prayers, rain fire upon her. May I see with my own eyes that tempest fall, her houses in ashes, her laurels in dust !—see the last Roman at his last gasp, and I, the cause of it, die of pleasure !"

This is more than Horatius can bear. He had that day fought for his country, and he will not suffer his sister to utter such imprecations. He draws his sword, rushes after her as she flies, and kills her behind the scene. The English reader, who has been accustomed to the actual perpetration of horrors on the stage, will remember the precept of Horace as translated by Francis :—

> "Let not Medea with unnatural rage
> Slaughter her mangled infants on the stage."

All such lessons coming down from the classics were as gospel to the French dramatists.

The fifth act brings the tragedy to a climax. Horatius is here put on his defence for the death of his sister. The old Horatius tells his son that though Camilla's fault was great, he was wrong so to punish her. The son answers that his life is in his father's hands, who has full power to take it from him, if it may so please him. Then the king enters with Valerius on a visit of condolence and inquiry, bewailing the new blow, which he fears the old man will find it hard to bear. Valerius, who has loved Camilla, then stands forth and appeals to the king for the punishment of Horatius. Who can be safe, he asks, among the

Roman people, who have so many ties with the neighbouring nations, if a bride is slain for weeping the death of her bridegroom because he died in battle against Rome? Horatius, however, will not attempt to defend himself. He is willing to die, but prays the king that his death may be an honourable one, and that his name shall not be held up to public reproach.

The scene, which has already assumed the solemnity of a trial, acquires a still deeper interest when Sabina enters. Her despair is of a character very different from that of Camilla; and there is a sombre grandeur about her, both in this scene and in the previous one, when she offers her life to her husband and brother. Again her entreaty is that her life may be accepted instead of that of Horatius. What has she to live for? she asks. "Sire, behold my misery and the condition to which I am reduced. What horror to embrace a man whose sword has destroyed my entire race! And what wickedness to hate a husband for having nobly served his country, his people, and you!" After the wife has thus spoken, the old Horatius is heard for his son. Our space does not permit us to reproduce his noble pleading. How could Romans sacrifice a man without whom Rome had ceased to be Rome? he asks with pride. The old man's appeal is wonderfully majestic, and the king accepts and adopts his plea. Horatius is pardoned. He has lessened his glory by a crime committed in the very moment of victory; but his offence is more than outweighed by the service he has rendered to his country.

This play was so much thought of in England, that within twenty-five years of its production in Paris there

were three versions of it in English verse, prepared for the English stage. The first was by Sir Wm. Lower; the second by Mrs Catherine Phillips, with an act added by Sir John Denham; and the third by Charles Cotton. But these translations would hardly be relished by English readers of this day.

CHAPTER IV.

POLYEUCTE.

THE scene of this play is laid in Melitene, the capital of Armenia, in the palace of Felix, a Roman senator, who had been sent by the Emperor Decius as governor of that province. The events are supposed to have taken place in the year 250 A.D. Polyeuctes and Nearchus are two noblemen, bound together in close friendship, though their religion is different. Nearchus is a Christian; Polyeuctes is still a pagan, though with a strong wish to become converted. The Emperor Decius had published an edict against the Christians, and had imposed upon Felix the duty of carrying it out in his province. This caused much uneasiness to Nearchus, who feared that he would thereby lose his friend. But when Polyeuctes knew of his anxiety, he assured him that he had no cause for fear, because he was fully determined to be baptised and become a Christian. In the first scene, Nearchus is very urgent that Polyeuctes should leave the palace, and receive at once the new baptism. Polyeuctes wishes to wait another day, because his wife Pauline has been much troubled as to his safety by an inauspicious dream. Pauline is the daughter of Felix,

and is therefore Roman. Before she married Polyeuctes she had loved a noble Roman called Severus; but though Severus was a man of high merit, and was also a favourite of the Emperor Decius, his fortune was small, and Felix had insisted upon his daughter marrying Polyeuctes, a man of wealth and renown in Armenia.

Of all Corneille's female characters, Pauline is perhaps the most attractive. She is the impersonation of duty, but also of lofty generosity, constancy, and love. Though her love for Severus still lingers in her heart, she attaches herself to Polyeuctes with the highest sense of conjugal duty. In the conflict between the old love and the new, she never allows herself to stray from her high loyalty to her husband; though she believes in the worth of Severus, so far even as to expect him to understand her in her lofty devotion. Polyeuctes, on the other hand, though he tenderly loves her, is at first preoccupied by, then entirely absorbed in, the higher duties of religion. The first scenes show him in all the uncertainty of the first conflict. He is a Christian, but he postpones his baptism with a painful perception of the consequences. Pauline has had a terrible dream of his death, and he cannot resist her entreaties when she implores him to remain at home, and not to risk the fulfilment of the visionary horror she has seen.

Nearchus, who has brought him to the faith of Christ, reasons strongly against this delay:—

"Have you then so full an assurance that you will live and be faithful? Does God, who holds your life in His hands, promise you this grace to-morrow? He is always just and good, but His grace is not always equally powerful; when

we linger, it loses that force which penetrates the heart. We harden ourselves, repel it, lose its aid. The arm that once poured it out freely becomes less liberal. And the holy ardour which should inspire us, reaches us more rarely or moves us no more."

While Polyeuctes hesitates and struggles, his wife is seen approaching, and in despair he takes a sudden resolution. "Let us go, then, since we must," he says to his friend; then turns to Pauline with an attempt at easy indifference.

"*Polyeuctes.* Farewell, Pauline,—farewell. I will return here in an hour.

Pauline. Why go you so suddenly? What occasion calls you? Is it for your honour? for your life?

Pol. More, far more than either.

Paul. What is this secret?

Pol. One day you shall know it: it is with pain I leave you; but it must be.

Paul. Yet you love me?

Pol. I love you, heaven be my witness, a hundred times more than I love myself! but——

Paul. But my distress does not move you! You have secrets that I may not know. Ah, what a proof of love is this! By our marriage vows I implore you, grant me this one day.

Pol. All this for a dream!

Paul. Such terrors are vain, I know it; but I love you, and therefore I fear.

Pol. What harm can happen in an hour? Farewell."

When Pauline is left in this disquietude, her father, Felix, suddenly comes in and gives her further occasion of fear. He tells her that Severus is not dead, as they had all supposed. Instead of this he has covered

himself with glory: he has rescued the life of the Emperor Decius, and has risen to the highest favour. He is now in Armenia, and approaching Melitene, with the hope of being able to marry Pauline. Felix bemoans his folly in having so little foreseen the elevation of his daughter's rejected suitor, and fears that when Severus finds her another man's wife he will revenge himself, and bring ruin upon the family. Pauline, too noble herself and too confident in the generosity of the man she once loved, for any such fear, implores her father that she may not be forced to see him. Felix, however, insists that his daughter shall receive Severus, as he thinks that she may soften his anger, and save himself from the disappointed lover's vengeance.

At the beginning of the second act, Severus learns from his servant Fabian that Pauline is married to Polyeuctes. He had come to Melitene with letters from the Emperor recommending him to Felix, and now he hears that his mistress has become the wife of another man. As is common with unfortunate lovers in the French drama, he declares that his only wish is to see her once more, to sigh before her, and then to die; but he acknowledges at the same time that Pauline had done no wrong in marrying the man. She had given him, Severus, no promise; nor could it be said that she had shown herself to be fickle. Her father's commands had been laid upon her, and she had acted dutifully in obeying him. Pauline arrives on the stage just in time to hear Severus exclaim, "Alas! she loves;—another man is her husband." She acknowledges that this is so.

"Yes, I love him, Severus, and I offer no excuse. Let others flatter and deceive, Pauline is noble and speaks from

an open heart. It was not the rumour of your death that ruined your cause. If heaven had left the choice in my hands, I would have given myself to you for yourself alone, caring nothing for the rigour of your former lot. For I saw that in you that set you higher than the most illustrious of monarchs. But my duty imposed other laws upon me. Whatsoever husband my father had chosen for me,—had you dazzled me with the lustre of a crown—had you been present with me—had I hated your rival,—I should have sighed, but obeyed. My reason triumphing over my passion, would have chidden my sighs and dispelled my hatred."

Severus taunts her with her easy love, which she can thus command to come and go at pleasure. But so great is her power over him, and so great the generosity in which she had justly trusted, that these two noble hearts soon understood each other, and he consents to see her no more. Their dialogue concludes as follows:—

"*Severus.* May just heaven, satisfied that I have suffered, accord long life and happiness to Pauline and to Polyeuctes!

Pauline. Oh that Severus, after so much misfortune, might find joy worthy of his worth!

Sev. I had found it in you.

Paul. But I was subject to my father.

Sev. O fatal duty, by which I am lost! And thou, most excellent, most lovely, adieu!

Paul. Adieu, unfortunate and generous lover!"

This noble struggle of as yet unextinguished love, with the force of grateful affection and duty, is very rare on the French stage, or indeed on any stage. But the lofty sentiment of Pauline's purity is without alloy, and not only draws with it the responsive generosity of her noble lover, but carries the reader on with the fullest sympathy.

When Polyeuctes returns, accompanied by Nearchus, he finds his wife weeping, and bids her dry her tears. He has come back, and all is now safe. But Pauline is still in all the agitation of her recent encounter, which she confides to him. Polyeuctes knows of his wife's former love for the man she could not marry, but is confident in her purity and truth.

Their conversation is interrupted by a messenger, who announces to Polyeuctes that Felix is waiting for him in the temple, and that the sacrifice—the sacrifice to the pagan gods—is ready to be offered. No one but Nearchus knows that Polyeuctes has been converted: he now comes forward and asks Polyeuctes how he can present himself in the temple and countenance the worship of the false gods. There is a momentary hesitation in the mind of the new convert. This difficulty had not occurred to him; but soon, in a burst of enthusiasm, he puts aside the advice of Nearchus not to go near to the altars of the false gods. "I will pull them down," he cries. "I will destroy them, or die in the temple." It is now the turn of Nearchus to hesitate. He is not prepared for martyrdom; but soon the zeal of the newly-baptised Christian kindles his teacher.

"*Nearchus.* Come, dear Polyeuctes, come! We will brave the idolaters before the eyes of all men, and show them what we are.

Polyeuctes. In this holy transport that heaven sends, I recognise you, Nearchus, and weep for joy. Quick! for the sacrifice is ready. Let us uphold the cause of the true God, and trample under foot the puny thunderbolt with which this credulous people arms a hand of rotten wood. Our God shall triumph. Let him dispose of the rest as he will."

In the next scene Stratonice, Pauline's confidante,

comes to her trembling and mysterious, with an account of what has happened in the temple. Pauline, who had feared some hostile encounter with Severus, is instantly in alarm; but to Stratonice the event is much more terrible. She bursts forth into denunciations. He is a traitor—a sacrilegious monster—he is a Christian! Pauline, though deeply startled by the news, maintains her husband's integrity. Even this does not move her from her faith in him. Stratonice then enters upon a full narrative of the event. She tells Pauline that as the priest was about to begin the sacrifice, Polyeuctes and Nearchus showed strong signs of irreverence. The people expressed their disapprobation, and Felix was offended; but Polyeuctes cared for nothing. He called out in a loud voice—

"What! Do you worship gods of wood and stone? Hear me, ye people,—hear me all. The God of Polyeuctes and of Nearchus is the only Ruler and Master of heaven and earth. He alone is subject to none. Alone he controls our destiny. It is this God, the God of the Christians, whom you must thank for the victories vouchsafed to your Emperor Decius. He has exalted him, and he can pull him down. The issue of the battle is in his hands. His goodness, his power and justice are immeasurable. It is he alone who punishes, he alone who rewards. These impotent monsters you adore in vain."

Stratonice goes on to tell how, when he had spoken, he and Nearchus threw down the vases holding the wine and incense, and how they rushed to the altar and overturned the statue of the country's god. The people were horror-struck, and feared that divine vengeance would fall upon them.

Felix then comes in, and tells his daughter that Nearchus must die. Polyeuctes is to witness his death, but not for the moment to share it: he is to be allowed in prison a place of repentance; but unless he recants, he must die also. Decius has ordained that the Christians in Armenia shall be put to death, and Felix, as governor, will not disobey the order. While the unhappy wife pleads for her husband, Albin, Felix's friend, comes to inform him that his commands have been executed, and that Nearchus has perished. He has met with his due punishment, and Polyeuctes has witnessed the execution without flinching. When Pauline would resume her pleadings, her father interrupts her. "You love your unworthy husband too much," he says. To which she makes a fine and spirited reply—

"It was by your choice that he became my husband. My love is no sin: he it was whom you honoured by your choice. If I love him, I am at least faultless. To accept him, I quenched the noblest passion which the loftiest heart could have owned. By that blind and ready obedience which I have always paid to a father's rights, let my prayer prevail with you now."

When Pauline withdraws, Felix demands further news of the execution, and Albin reports that Nearchus died sullenly, without a regret and without a murmur: obstinately defying all pain to the very end, and surrendering his life like a Christian, with blasphemy on his lips. Polyeuctes, too, has borne a proud front; instead of yielding, he was with difficulty removed from the scaffold; but he is now in prison and in chains. Felix then bewails his hard fate in being the judge of his son-in-law. He loves him, and would save him if

he could do so; but the Emperor's will must be carried out—and even if Decius would consent to forgive him, the anger of Severus is to be feared. Here a calculation comes in which is very natural, since it occurs to Polyeuctes also in his prison as he reflects upon his Pauline's melancholy fate. Felix cannot help feeling that in the death of his Christian son-in-law there is a ready solution of all his difficulties. Were Polyeuctes once dead, Pauline might still be happy with Severus, the favourite of the Emperor, whom she had once loved; and in that case, how much more happy the position of her father! It is a way of clearing up the situation which Felix cannot banish from his mind.

At the beginning of the fourth act we are introduced to Polyeuctes in prison. He has been told that Pauline has asked to see him, and he trembles. "I fear my executioners less than her tears," he says. He has overcome Felix and his threats, but how overcome his wife and her tenderness? In haste he sends for Severus, that she may have a protector. When he has done this, the prisoner, alone in his cell, bursts forth into a song, as we have seen Roderigo in "The Cid." Supreme emotion thus takes a lyric form in Corneille's thoughts. In those high-strung lines he detaches himself from earth and Pauline, so that he is able to meet her with a show of fortitude. The controversy between them is impassioned. His religion is to her a ridiculous dream to begin with; but the spectator perceives by degrees the change that is coming. Polyeuctes, if he will not obey the Emperor, must die; but Pauline cannot move him by any of her arguments. He prays that his wife may, like himself, be converted; but she does not seem even to understand

his prayer. She wishes only that he should return to her. When she is about to leave him, Severus enters. Pauline is bewildered by his appearance. She asks angrily if he has come here to insult the unhappy. But Polyeuctes takes his rival's part. It is he who has sent for Severus, and with the intention of resigning Pauline to him. With a due respect for the noble lover, he offers him the "treasure of which I was not worthy," bids them live happy, and is led out by the guards, leaving them together. Severus, astonished, does not know what to say. He is divided between admiration of his rival and mingled fear and eagerness to take advantage of his renunciation. But Pauline stands and listens with a countenance that gives him no encouragement; and when he begins to speak of his love, she arrests him in a moment:—

"Stop there; I fear to hear too much; the warmth of your love may drive us both to some extremity unworthy of us. Severus, learn to know Pauline. My Polyeuctes is about to die; he has but a moment of life; and you, though innocently, are the cause of his death. I know not if you build any hope upon his loss; but learn that there is no death to which, with calm countenance, I would not go, there is no torture in hell I would not endure, rather than cast a stain upon honour so pure—rather than, after his unhappy lot, espouse one who in any sort had been the cause of it. Did you think I had so base a soul? The affection I once bore you would turn to lasting hatred. You are generous; remain so to the end. My father fears you, and would accord you all things; if my husband dies, it is for your sake he sacrifices him. Save him, then: make yourself his prop, that he may lean upon you. I know I am asking great things of you; but the greater the effort, the greater is the glory. To protect a rival of whom you

are jealous is an act of virtue worthy of Severus. If the glory of this is not enough to move you, think how great a thing it is that a woman, once beloved and perhaps still dear, should owe to you what is most dear to her. Remember that you are Severus. Farewell; consider alone what you ought to do. If you are not such as I think you, I prefer not to know it, that I may esteem you still."

This address is for Severus like a thunderstroke. He had begun to hope that happiness at last might be his. "Your soul is as great as it is unhappy; but oh, as cruel as it is generous, Pauline!" he cries. Yet his whole being answers to her appeal. When Fabian, his attendant, represents to him that it would be even dangerous to himself, as well as crushing to his hopes, to save a Christian, he answers firmly, "This advice might be good for a common soul, but I am still Severus." He cannot act against his own generous nature. Severus is the type of generosity, as Pauline is of duty. Then he reflects sadly upon the folly of persecution. Why should the Christians alone be thus pursued? They serve one God; their morals are pure; yet all are tolerated save them.

"The monsters of Egypt have temples in Rome. Our ancestors made a god of a man at their pleasure, and we, preserving their errors with their blood, have filled all heaven with our emperors. The Christians have but one God, who is Master of all: our gods agree but badly together; for though their rage may crush us, it must be said we have too many gods to be all true."[1]

The scene ends with the resolution of Severus to deliver Polyeuctes, "to satisfy Pauline, my glory and my pity."

[1] Such was the character that Corneille wished to give to Severus. And there are some few verses which we find in the earlier editions

At the commencement of the fifth act Felix is loudly expressing to Albin his anger against Severus. He has interceded for Polyeuctes; but the governor distrusts him, and thinks that he is only laying a trap for him. Albin is so far from sympathising that he takes advantage of the occasion to plead in his own person for "Grace! grace!" for Polyeuctes. But Felix is inflexible. He will not lay himself open to any charge that Severus may bring against him for not obeying the order of the Emperor. Polyeuctes is then brought in by his jailers for final examination. Felix affects to question him upon his faith, and to desire instruction; but afterwards avows that this is only a pretence to gain time. I have too long wronged our all-powerful gods," he says. "Choose if you will give them your blood or your incense." "My choice is not doubtful," answers Polyeuctes; "but, oh heavens! here comes Pauline."

"*Pauline.* Which of you two is to slay me to-day? Shall it be both at once, or each in turn? Will neither nature yield, nor love? Can I win nothing from a husband, nothing from a father?

Felix. Speak to your husband.

Pol. Live for Severus.

Paul. Kill me if you will, but insult me not.

Pol. My love through pity tries to find you solace; it sees the sorrow in your soul, and knows that another love

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of the play which the poet afterwards retracted. It is said that he regretted having written them; but we shall not now be lessening our respect for the memory of the great man by reading these lines, and judging of them for ourselves:—

"Peut-être qu'après tout ces croyances publiques
Ne sont qu'inventions de sages politiques,
Pour contenir un peuple ou bien pour l'émouvoir,
Et dessus sa faiblesse affermir leur pouvoir."

is the sole remedy. Since his great worth once made you love him, his presence should still give you pleasure. Since he has captivated you by his merits, his presence must be to you a source of pleasure. You loved him; he loves you: he is more famous than ever——

Paul. Cruel, what have I done to be thus treated? Do you reproach me with a love which I conquered for you? What efforts have I made to give thee the heart, so justly gained by its first victor! If ingratitude does not reign altogether in thy heart, try at least to give yourself back to Pauline. Learn from her to put force on yourself: let her be the guide of your blindness. Grant to her the boon of your own life, that she may live subject to your laws. If you can reject such just wishes, at least consider her tears, her sighs: do not drive to despair a heart that adores you.

Pol. Hear me once more, Pauline: I have said it already. Live for Severus, or die with me. I despise not your tears or your faith; but notwithstanding all our love, I know you no more unless as a Christian."

Pauline then throws herself at the feet of her father to entreat mercy. "He is frantic, and you are reasonable," she cries. Felix himself attempts to reason with the eager martyr; but Polyeuctes bursts forth into an enthusiastic confession of his faith, and no more is to be said.

"*Fel.* My pity at last gives way to just wrath. Adore the gods, or die.

Pol. I am a Christian.

Fel. Infidel! Adore the gods, I say, or die. Soldiers, obey your orders.

Paul. Where do you send him?

Fel. To death.

Pol. To glory."

After this agitating scene, Polyeuctes is led away, Pauline following him; but she speedily reappears upon

the stage in all the passion of grief and longed-for martyrdom.

"*Paul.* Barbarous father, complete, complete your work! The second victim is worthy of your rage. Let your daughter join your son-in-law. Take courage! Why delay? You see in her the same crime or the same virtue. My husband in dying has left his faith to me. His blood, with which I am covered, has opened my eyes. I see, I know, I believe, I am freed from error. In that blessed blood I am baptised. I am a Christian; what more is there to say?"

Severus now enters, and, assailing Felix with fresh reproaches, declares that he is now as much his enemy as he would have been his friend. But the unfortunate governor has not passed through all these scenes unmoved. "Do not think," he cries, "that I hope to preserve my office by these cruelties. I fling it at your feet. I find myself drawn by a secret force. I yield to movements which I cannot understand. I have shed the innocent blood of Polyeuctes. I have made him a martyr; he has made me a Christian."

With this unexpected conversion the drama comes to a somewhat sudden end.

CHAPTER V

LE MENTEUR—THE LIAR.

THE first act of this comedy passes in the Tuileries gardens in Paris. The other four are laid in the Place Royale. The Place Royale still exists, and in the first half of the seventeenth century it was considered to be the most aristocratic part of Paris. It is not far from the Bastille—a long way from the Tuileries,—lying between the Boulevard Beaumarchais and the Rue St Antoine. Dorante, the principal character in the play, a young man of good birth, has been studying law at Poitiers, and he has come to Paris determined to see the gay world and to enjoy the delights of the capital. He has put aside his country clothes, and is now dressed extravagantly, after the fashion of the day. The curtain rises upon Dorante and his valet Cliton; and Dorante tells his valet his intentions, and begs him to assist him in his enterprises. Cliton assures him he does not look in the least like a lawyer, but has rather the air of a man who is likely to create jealousy amongst husbands. Dorante is willing to believe what Cliton tells him of his good grace, but still is anxious to know whether he has lost his provincial mannerisms,

and if he has about him the style of a man of fashion. He asks, in fact, whether he will "do" for Paris. One of the peculiarities of the valet in the older French comedy is, that he is apparently a man wise on all subjects, and seems to know and be able to do everything. Cliton, who is not less shrewd than his fellows, tells his master that the only way to find out what Paris is like is to live there. Paris, he says, is like any other place: very much that is good may be found there, and also much that is bad. There, as elsewhere, a man is taken for what he is worth, and his worth is often reckoned by the estimation he has of himself. "But to come to the main point," the valet asks, "are you liberal?" Dorante answers that he is not stingy. "'Tis a rare and happy knack, sir, in the art of wooing. And you must have address withal, and be gracious, or you may lose your mistress from want of knowledge."

Dorante is suddenly startled by seeing a young lady trip as she is walking, and the false step nearly causes her to fall. Clarice and her friend Lucrèce are in the Tuileries gardens, and to Clarice the mishap occurs. Dorante is a stranger to the two ladies, but he runs to offer his assistance; and he tells Clarice how much reason he has to be thankful for the accident which has procured him such happiness. He engages her in conversation, she not being disinclined to talk with a handsome and well-dressed young man; and in a very short time he declares his passion. Clarice is astonished at such sudden protestations of love; but Dorante replies that for the last twelve months, since he has come back from the war in Germany, where he had been fighting for four years previously, he has been constantly passing under her

window in the hope of seeing her, and he now entreats her to receive his addresses. This is how the liar begins his career. Clarice has swallowed the bait thrown out to her, and replies, "What! you have then seen Germany and the wars?" "Four years ago I was feared there like the thunder," he says. Dorante goes on to vaunt his prowess, Cliton with consternation attempting in vain to restrain him. Dorante declares that he had made a great name for himself in the army, and that he would be there now, fighting at the head of his troops, had he not seen Clarice and been captivated by her charms. Lucrèce is silent while her friend is listening to Dorante; and presently Isabelle, Clarice's waiting-woman, tells her that Alcippe, her lover, is approaching, and that he will be annoyed if he sees her talking with a strange gentleman in a public garden.

As soon as their backs are turned, Dorante and Cliton compare notes on the two young ladies. Dorante is evidently smitten with her to whom he was talking, and does not care for the other, who did not venture to exchange a word with him. He does not know anything of either of them; but as Cliton has heard that Lucrèce was the name of the prettier of the two, Dorante therefore imagines that Lucrèce must be the object of his admiration. The master and the valet are both agreed in giving the name of Lucrèce to the lady of their choice, but their tastes as to beauty and merit differ. Cliton tries to persuade his master that the other girl—that is, the real Lucrèce—is the worthier. "Depend upon it, sir, when a woman is able to hold her tongue, it is a proof she is a good example of her kind,

. . . The one I mean is Lucrèce; she is the best one, or you may call me a fool for my pains."

Alcippe and Philiste then join Dorante. When they appear on the scene they are talking of a great entertainment that had been given to some ladies on the previous evening outside Paris, on the banks of the Seine. Dorante learns from them all they know about this party; and as they are ignorant who was the entertainer, he coolly takes the credit to himself, and declares that he was the host. He also informs them that he has only been in Paris a month (he had told Clarice he had been there a year), and that he rarely goes out in the day. He confines his visiting to the evening, and then issues forth in disguise. Alcippe congratulates him on having made friends so soon, and passes on with his companion. When they are alone, Cliton begs to be allowed to speak freely to his master. Permission is given, and he begins—

"*Cliton.* Is it your custom, sir, to dream as you talk?

Dorante. When did you see me dreaming?

Clit. I call dreaming what in another than one's master one would call lying. I wish, sir, to speak with respect.

Dor. Poor-witted fellow!

Clit. I lose my wits indeed when I hear you talk of the wars, and of entertainments; your last battles have been without danger, and your feasts have cost you little. Why do you pretend to have returned a year ago?

Dor. To show more spirit, and pay my addresses with a better grace.

Clit. How do the wars make you show a better grace?

Dor. It would be a fine way to please a lady to begin by telling her, I bring you a heart fresh from the university. If you have need of laws or rubrics, I know the entire code. It is much better to introduce yourself as a soldier.

All the secret is in the air you assume ; lie discreetly, swear with a good grace, produce big words that they don't understand. . . . Have angles, lines, ditches, vedettes, counterscarps always in your mouth ; by such a beginning you pass for an illustrious person.

Clit. You make those who hear you believe it ; but they must soon know your true story.

Dor. I shall always have gained something. . . . I love to outdo the story-tellers : and if any one thinks he can teach me something, I shall soon find a tale that will take the wind out of his sails. If you but knew what a pleasure there is in seeing a man compelled to eat his own words !

Clit. I suppose it must be a great one. But your skill may some day bring you into trouble."

In the second act Clarice is in doubt as to what to do. Géronte, Dorante's father, has proposed to her for his son. He makes the most of his son's good qualities. He hopes Clarice will not despise him because he has not seen more of the world : the young man has only just come from Poitiers, where he has been reading law ; but his manners are good, and he is not so like a raw young student as many others of his age. Clarice has been engaged to Alcippe for two years ; she does not want to throw him over, but she fears that people will talk about her unfavourably, as her marriage has been so often postponed. She is ready to receive Dorante's attentions, though she does not want to marry him without knowing more about him. Isabelle, her attendant, hits upon a device. She suggests that Clarice's friend Lucrèce should write to Dorante and ask him to meet her some evening under her window ; and Clarice should pretend to be Lucrèce, feigning her voice and her manner. When Isabelle goes to ask Lucrèce if she will do

this service for her friend, Alcippe comes to reproach Clarice for her inconstancy. He imagines that it was to her the entertainment had been given, for he had believed Dorante that he was the giver of the feast. Clarice is ignorant of the whole affair, but Alcippe will not believe her. He is left alone in his jealousy, and determines to fight his rival and former friend.

We have now a new scene with Dorante. His father, Géronte, tells him that as he is his only son, all his hopes are concentrated in him, and he is anxious to provide for himself a grandchild to comfort him in his old age. In short, he has made his choice of a wife for his son. Dorante recalls to mind the charming girl that he had met in the Tuileries gardens, who he persists in thinking was Lucrèce, but whom the reader knows to have been Clarice; and he asks his father to think well over the matter, and not to make up his mind hurriedly on so important a business. His father tells him that he has taken all the necessary precautions; that he is quite satisfied as to Clarice's good qualities; and that he and her father, who are old friends, have arranged the whole affair. Dorante, finding his father inflexible, has recourse to stratagem. He kneels down before Géronte and stammers out that he is married already. He is very repentant: he says it was not all his own fault; he was forced into a marriage by a mere chance; and he hopes that as his wife comes from a good family, his father will not be angry with him because she has not so much money as he might have expected. The father does not scold his son, but insists on knowing the whole history before he will say more. Dorante begins his tale. The girl's name is Orphise; her father's is Ar-

médon. He saw her very shortly after he went to Poitiers, and was at once charmed with her beauty and her manners. The attachment was reciprocal; she soon got to like him, and to give him signs of her partiality. But in all her favours she was perfectly honest and straightforward.

"One evening,—let me see; yes, it was the 2d of September,—I went to call upon her. Her father that evening supped away from home, and on his return he knocked at his daughter's door. She, alarmed and ashamed, turning pale, then red, hid me in a corner, then opened the door to her father, and threw her arms about his neck to conceal her disorder. Then he seated himself, and began to tell her of a husband who had been proposed to him for her. Judge how much my heart suffered! She put him off with a clever excuse; but when the good man was going away my watch began to strike. He turned round astonished to his daughter and said, 'When did you get that watch? Who gave it to you?' 'My cousin Acaste has just sent it to me to be cleaned, as there are no watchmakers where he lives. It has struck twice in a quarter of an hour.' 'Give it to me,' he said, 'I will take better care of it.' Orphise came slowly towards me; and as I was putting the watch into her hand, unfortunately the chain attached to it got entangled round my pistol and pulled the trigger. The pistol went off, and Orphise fell down in a swoon. I thought her dead. Her father rushed out and cried for help. I at once darted down-stairs, but I was stopped by Armédon's son and his two valets, who were coming to his rescue. I made my way through them; but, as luck would have it, my sword broke. Disarmed, I turned back into the room, where Orphise, recovered from her fright, shut the door upon me. We barricaded ourselves with the bed, and the tables, and chairs; but in the meanwhile they knocked a hole through the wall from the next room. And so, finding myself fairly captured, I was obliged to surrender."

All this story is told in the open street, in the Place Royale; and Clarice and Lucrèce, each from their window, are both listening to Dorante, though they are not seen by him or by his father.

Géronte interrupts him in his narrative—

"*Géronte.* That is to say, in plain French, that you had to marry her?

Dorante. Her people found me alone with her in her room. They had strength on their side, and she was lovely. Her efforts to save me, her danger, her tears, gave her new charms to my heart. Thus, to save my life, as well as her honour, I changed with a word the storm to a calm."

Géronte thinks that the affair might have been worse. He is rejoiced to hear that his daughter-in-law comes of a good family; and he frankly forgives his son, saying that he must hasten away to break off the engagement with Clarice's father.

When he has gone, Dorante turns to Cliton—

"*Dor.* Well, now, what do you think of my story? Did not I get out of it well? And how the good man believed me!

Clit. What! is it possible this was not true?

Dor. Not one word of it. My heart is still faithful to Lucrèce.

Clit. What! . . . the watch, the pistol going off, your sword breaking . . .

Dor. All pure invention, my good fellow."

Cliton is horrified at his master's audacity, but he cannot help admiring his courage and his ready wit.

"*Clit.* Would you have the kindness, sir, whenever you are going to perform one of your grand feats, to let your poor valet know of your intentions beforehand? Although I had my suspicions, I was taken in too.

Dor. Take care not to be taken in again : in future you shall know all my secrets, and be the secretary of all my thoughts."

Sabine, Lucrèce's maid, then brings to Dorante a letter from her mistress asking him to come to her under her window that evening. This letter quite confirms Dorante in the thought that Lucrèce was the name of his charmer in the Tuileries gardens. He sends his valet to learn who Lucrèce's father is, and to find out details of her family.

Another letter is brought to Dorante, from Alcippe; and this one is more serious, as it contains a challenge. Dorante reads it, and says to himself—

"I only came back from Poitiers yesterday: this is the first day I have shown my face out of doors, and I have already picked up a quarrel, a love affair, and a marriage. Well, that's not so bad for a beginning. Let a lawsuit come now, and I shall be complete."

At the beginning of the third act, we find that Alcippe and Dorante have fought their duel. Neither of them was hurt, and when Philiste brings them together again, Dorante asks Alcippe what was the reason of their quarrel. Alcippe is very explicit. He says that for two years he has been secretly engaged to Clarice; yet that Dorante, knowing of his engagement, gave a ball in her honour, though aware that it would annoy him; and concealed his own return on purpose to play this trick upon his friend. Dorante declares that he may set his mind at rest, that the lady whom he had entertained was married, and that Alcippe need therefore have had no cause for displeasure against him. And thus they part on good terms. When Philiste is left alone with

Alcippe, he tells him that not a word of what Dorante had said was true. As a matter of fact, Dorante had only yesterday come back from Poitiers, and instead of giving a supper-party which lasted until five or six o'clock in the morning, he was all the while at home comfortably asleep in his own bed. Philiste does not doubt that Dorante may be a man of good courage, but he is sure that he is an outrageous liar. He advises Alcippe not to trouble himself with any jealousy. If Alcippe will wait patiently, Clarice will soon get the better of her anger.

Clarice is not indifferent to Dorante, though she, too, has discovered him to be a liar, and though she is angry with him for having told Alcippe that he had entertained her at supper and danced with her all night. She had heard him tell his father that he was already married; but not knowing what to believe, she is ready to talk to him from the window, in the hope of finding out whether he is true to her or not. In the meantime Dorante and Cliton arrive at the appointed place, and the valet tells his master that he has heard news of Lucrèce from one of her father's servants.

"*Clit.* But if the lady were to prove as clever at lying as yourself, it would be a great amusement to me: I wish she could have the talent for a single hour, that she might beat you at your own trade.

Dor. Heaven sends such a gift to few: you must have a ready wit, judgment, and memory, never hesitate, and still less blush."

Clarice comes to the window and feigns to be Lucrèce. Lucrèce is also at the window, but she stands so as not to be seen by the two men below. Dorante and Cliton are both deceived by the stratagem.

The two ladies are joking together about Dorante's mendacious effrontery, and Clarice is determined to draw him out, and see how far he will go on with his lying. As it happens, Dorante is now perfectly truthful; but his error in mistaking Clarice for Lucrèce only serves to give them another reason for disbelieving him. He tells Clarice that he is over head and ears in love with her. If she will accept him, he is ready to marry her to-morrow. Clarice replies that he would say the same to twenty other women. She cannot believe him after what he said to her about being in the wars, about giving a ball, and after hearing him tell his father that he was already married to somebody else. Dorante avoids the first two accusations, and declares that he made believe that he was married only that he might be free to marry his charming Lucrèce—

"Reproach me for my falsehood—call me a rogue and an impostor, if you will,—but give me, at any rate, the credit of having loved, and join to these names that of your lover.

Clarice. The violence of your love at the moment of its birth makes me distrust it: how could my eyes have so much power when you had hardly seen me, and did not know me?"

Dorante then tells her what Cliton had learnt from the servant.

"You have lost your mother, and Périandre is your father's name. He is a lawyer, skilful and busy, with ten thousand crowns of income. Your brother was killed in the war in Italy, and you have a sister called Julia. Now, can you say I know nothing about you?"

Clarice whispers to Lucrèce, "Good cousin, I think he

is in love with you." "I wish, indeed, he were," Lucrèce says to herself.

Clarice is determined to go on to the end, and consequently she hears something about herself that she does not relish, and finally dismisses Dorante, telling him that she is disgusted with his impudence and his impostures. Cliton further ridicules his master by saying that he has cried wolf so often that now nobody will believe him.

Early the next morning the valet tells his master that there is a rumour that Alcippe has been fighting a duel.

"*Dor.* With whom?

Clit. No one knows; but it is said with some one very like yourself: and if I had not been with you all the day yesterday, I should suspect you.

Dor. Did not you leave me to go to the house of Lucrèce?

Clit. Ah, sir, can it be you that has played this trick?"

Dorante excuses himself for not having kept his promise of confidence to his valet by explaining that this was an old quarrel that had one day to be fought out, and which had existed before he and Cliton had come together. He had met Alcippe the day before, and sent his servant away on purpose. They had both agreed that the meeting should take place at once; and when he, Dorante, left the ground, his adversary was lying in his own blood.

"*Clit.* Then he is dead?

Dor. I left him for dead.

Clit. I pity him, poor man, for he was a kind gentleman."

Perhaps, of all Dorante's lies, this one is told with the most perfect self-assurance; and this scene between the

master and his valet, when well played, has a capital effect upon the stage.

In the next scene Alcippe suddenly appears and rushes into Dorante's arms. Cliton is horror-struck, and shrieks as though he had seen an apparition. Alcippe is in a state of great joy, because his father has come to Paris, and has given his consent to his son's marriage with Clarice. Dorante, who thinks of no other woman but her whom he imagines to be Lucrèce, heartily congratulates his friend; and Cliton, who has recovered from his fright, whispers to his master, "The people that you kill seem to enjoy very good health." When they are alone, the valet reproaches his master for having broken his promise to tell him the truth.

"*Dor.* What! then my duel seems to you an invention?

Clit. I'll believe anything you like, sir, not to displease you. But you tell so many stories everywhere, at all hours, that he had need be a favourite of heaven who escapes you."

Dorante, however, will not acknowledge this falsehood; his invention is not exhausted. He declares that Alcippe was indeed wounded to death, but tells his valet of certain "powders of sympathy" which work wonders, so that a man is recalled from the gates of death by them. "Tell me this secret, and I will serve you without wages," cries Cliton; but his master informs him that the knowledge of Hebrew is essential.

"*Clit.* Then you know Hebrew?

Dor. Know Hebrew? perfectly! I have ten languages at my fingers' ends.

Clit. You would need to have ten of the best to furnish so many lies."

Géronte, Dorante's father, now perplexes his son by wishing to see his wife. He suggests that he should go to Poitiers and bring her to Paris. Dorante wishes to excuse himself, and says that his wife is about to have a child. The old man is more delighted than ever: he will write to his daughter-in-law's father and congratulate him. He asks his name, which for the moment he has forgotten. Dorante answers, "Pyrandre."

"*Géronte.* Pyrandre! I thought you told me it was Armédon.

Dor. Yes; it is all the same. One is his surname, and the other is the name of his property, which he sometimes adopts."

And Géronte goes off quite happy at the good news he has heard. Soon afterwards, however, he meets Philiste, and asks him if he, who comes from Poitiers, can tell him anything of a gentleman there named Pyrandre, or Armédon, as he is sometimes called. His son, he says, is married to this gentleman's daughter, and he would like to hear something about the family. Philiste declares his entire ignorance of any such names—

"*Philiste.* Since he has told you of them, no doubt he will give you a full account. He knows all the circumstances better than I do. I would not have you mistrust him; but he is very clever in imagining, and I am slow in guessing.

Gér. You make me doubt his story.

Phil. I think, if you never have any other daughter-in-law but this Orphise, your nephews and nieces may think themselves fortunate."

Géronte perceives that he has been deceived; and when he meets his son, he rates him soundly for his imposture. When Dorante finds that his father has discovered his

lies, he avows his artifice, and makes the same excuse to his father that he had previously made to Clarice. He had made believe that he was married only in order that he might be free to marry Lucrèce; and he thought that a bit of scheming was permissible in love.

"*Gér.* You are deceiving me still.

Dor. If you do not believe me, at least you may believe Cliton, who knows all my secrets.

Gér. And you do not die of shame to think that even your father gives more faith to your valet than to you? . . . But stay: I know your Lucrèce. I will go and ask her hand; but if the smallest obstacle arises on your side, if thou liest again, or would deceive me, flee from my sight, and never let me behold thee more. Remember my oath: by the day that lights us thou shalt die by thy father's hand!"

Dorante begins to fear that he has brought a new trouble on himself. Cliton suggests that this is probably a feeling of remorse for having spoken the truth. But Dorante reflects that his father has gone to Lucrèce to find out if what he has said about her is true; and he now perceives that he does not care for one any more than for the other.

"*Clit.* Then why did you pretend so much love, and induce your father to ask her in marriage?

Dor. It was the only way to make him believe anything.

Clit. What! even in speaking the truth, you were lying all the time?"

Voltaire remarks, truly enough indeed, that it is not easy to tell which of the two ladies Dorante loves. The reader of the play gets confused; and though he would fain forgive Dorante for his lies, he cannot forgive his

carelessness about his sweetheart. When Dorante is presented to us, we soon learn what his failing is; but we have to accept him nevertheless. If he spoke the truth, there had been no comedy. But if, in addition to his lies, he is indifferent to his mistress, our sympathetic interest in him grows lukewarm.

Dorante had told his father he loved Lucrèce, merely to appease the old man's anger. And neither Clarice nor Lucrèce can believe him. Clarice is quite willing to leave Dorante to her friend, now that she is sure of Alcippe; but Lucrèce fears to trust herself to the man whom she cannot believe. Dorante has indeed an advantage over them. When they bring his impostures home to him, he turns the tables upon them, and accuses them of having deceived him by each pretending to be the other when they spoke to him from their balcony. Here they have to acknowledge their subterfuge; and Dorante makes the most of his position by earnestly protesting to Lucrèce that he now cares for no other woman but herself. She yields at length to his entreaties, and all ends happily.

The liar, indeed, is the favourite of the author throughout, and his power of invention amuses us much more than his endless fictions repel us; which is a weakness inherent in every plot of this description.

END OF CORNEILLE.

RACINE.

CHAPTER I.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

JEAN RACINE was born at La Ferté-Milon, a small town in France, now in the department of Aisne, on the 21st of December 1639. His father, Jean Racine, was at this time the "contrôleur à grenier à sel," or salt-tax collector, at La Ferté,—he having succeeded his father, also Jean Racine, who was still alive. This was an office held under the State, and conferred a certain social position upon the possessor. In September 1638 the father of our Racine had married Jeanne Sconin, the daughter of a man in the same rank of life as himself, and in fifteen months from the date of their marriage the future poet and dramatist came into the world. Jeanne Sconin gave birth to a daughter, Marie, in January 1641, and died four days afterwards. Within two years of her death Jean Racine, the widower, married Madeleine Vol, the daughter of a notary at La Ferté, and he died three months after the marriage. His two

children were thus orphans at a very early age, and he left for them no provision. His appointment was sold to his second father-in-law for three hundred and fifty francs,—thus showing the way such places were then dealt with in France. He had no other assets, and this sum was not sufficient to pay his debts. His widow renounced her claim to any right of dower; and after the death of her husband, we do not hear of her again in connection with her step-children. But the two little orphans were not left destitute. His father's mother, Marie des Moulins, took charge of little Jean; and Pierre Sconin, the father of their mother, undertook to bring up Marie Racine. Young Racine passed his infancy under his maternal grandfather's roof. The old man died in 1649, when the boy was but ten years old; and but for the protection he gave to his son's son, we should in all probability have never heard of him.

Marie des Moulins seems to have been much attached to young Racine, an attachment fully returned on his part. Writing to his sister in July 1663, he says, speaking of his grandmother,—"She is dangerously ill, and it is not likely that she will recover. I cannot tell you how grieved I am; for I should be the most ungrateful creature in the world if I did not love a mother who has been so kind to me, and who has taken more care of me than of her own children. And she was no less fond of you, though she never had occasion to show it to you." In less than a month he wrote again to his sister, telling her of their grandmother's death.

Many of Racine's relations were connected with the monastery of Port-Royal. It is unnecessary to speak at length of an establishment so well known, but it must

be referred to, as those connected with it, — Racine's friends as well as his relations,—had much to do with his education, and they will have to be mentioned later in reference to certain events in his life.

The monastery of Port-Royal,—or Port-Royal des Champs, as it came to be called,—was near Chevreuse, not very far from Versailles, and was founded early in the thirteenth century with the purpose of affording an asylum to women who wished to live in seclusion from the world without binding themselves by any permanent vows.[1] These women devoted much of their time to the bringing up of young children. In 1626 the old establishment in the country was abandoned because of the dampness of the place, and the recluses moved to a house in Paris in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques. Their new home was called Port-Royal de Paris, and the heads of this branch in the capital devoted much of their time and care to the bringing up and to the religious instruction of young girls. But the old building in the country was not deserted. The religious community still kept possession of the monastery, and it was used as a retreat for a few learned and pious men who wished to lead a secluded life in the same spirit and with the same objects as the women had done for very many years previously. These men were known as the "Solitaires de Port-Royal." The theological disputes and quarrels which were then raging high, and in which the com-

[1] In the first chapter of his 'History of Port-Royal,' after speaking of the *abbey* as a *convent*, Sainte-Beuve says in a footnote that the historians of Port-Royal, and those belonging to it, never use the word *convent* in speaking of their retreat; they always say *abbey* or *monastery*. Sainte-Beuve himself endeavoured to conform to the general practice.

munity was so deeply involved, do not touch our subject, and they have already been ably discussed in the present series. We are not now called upon to sympathise with or to criticise their beliefs; but in all cases they endeavoured to do their work manfully, and with straight honesty of purpose. The education of boys was their foremost object; and under the guidance of the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, the "Petites Écoles" were established in 1637.

The name "Les Petites Écoles," or "The Small Schools," was chosen as being modest and unpretending, showing that they were not meant to rival the colleges of the university, but rather to prepare boys for the higher classes. The pupils soon increased in numbers—though they seem never to have been more than fifty; and in the year 1646 the schools were remodelled, and established at the monastery in Paris. The Solitaries themselves were doubtless imbued with Jansenist doctrines; but we have the testimony of one who had been brought up by them, that no special religious creed was inculcated, but that the boys were specially taught to have "a great horror of lying." The Jesuits, who were the enemies of the Port-Royalists, feared the rival power, and by their influence the schools were dispersed. This was in 1650. The establishment in Paris was perhaps not wholly closed; but it is probable that little regular instruction was practicable. The Solitaries left Paris: they divided themselves into three parties and went into the country, and so carried on their teaching. Racine was a scholar at one of these rural establishments where Claude Lancelot seems to have been the chief master; and he and Pierre Nicole were Racine's instructors. Lancelot was the

teacher of Greek and mathematics, and Nicole of Latin and the humanities. Nicole was a good Latin scholar; Lancelot's grammars, Greek and Latin, have been translated into various languages, and were much used in English schools for a long time prior to the early years of this century. The "Petites Écoles" did not long survive Racine's time: they were broken up and completely dispersed in 1660 through the evil machinations of the Jesuits—"who wish always to be single-handed in everything that does any good."[1] Racine undoubtedly owed much to the care of the Solitaries. They taught him his Latin and Greek, though they did not give him that scholarship which he afterwards attained. It cannot be said that the Port-Royalists were elegant scholars. If we except Pascal's "Letters" and his "Thoughts," there is almost nothing else written by them that would now excite in us a deeper interest than that of curiosity, though they will always hold an interesting place in the history of the time. The ascetic tone and temperament of their lives would have prevented a lively and warm appreciation of profane literature. They were acute grammarians rather than men with convincing argument and delicate judgment. But had it not been for their teaching, religious as well as classical, it is probable that neither "Esther" nor "Athalie" would have been written.

But before Racine was intrusted to the care of these good men, he was sent to school at the Collége de Beauvais, no doubt by their advice. He went there,

[1] These words are taken from Sainte-Beuve's History. The learned author has put the passage into inverted commas, but has given no reference to where he has taken it from.

most likely, in 1650 or 1651, and stayed until 1655. He was then in his sixteenth year. We may believe that he did well at Beauvais; for he was admitted into Port-Royal at an earlier age than that at which it was customary to receive scholars, and he remained there for three years—from 1655 to 1658.

Young Racine was gifted with a very retentive memory. One day Lancelot discovered that he was reading a Greek love-story, and judging the book to be not suitable for him, took it from him and threw it into the fire. The boy was very much interested in the story, and bought another copy. Lancelot again found him reading the same tale, and the second copy shared the same fate as the first. By some means Racine procured a third copy of the book. He learned the story by heart, and then took the book to his master, saying, "You may now burn this one as you have burnt the others." We can picture to ourselves young Racine at school,—a sharp precocious lad, headstrong and quick in temper among his fellows, as he was quick and clever when alone over his books; modest as to his own acquirements, but not at all willing to forego what of right belonged to him; kind and good-natured, but proud and sensitive, and ready to take offence; eager and very ready for fun when the time for amusement came, entering into whatever he did with his whole heart and spirit,—such we may imagine to have been the character of the boy who afterwards became the great poet of his country.

His masters at Port-Royal were fond of him; and it is pleasant now to think that in his short history of the monastery, written quite at the close of his life, he speaks of them with a grateful remembrance. In spite

of any waywardness of temper that he may have shown, Racine must have been obedient to their instructions. He was not nineteen when he left Port-Royal, and he had then annotated and made marginal notes in many of his books. This was more the case with Greek authors than with Latin. Sophocles and Euripides pleased him so much that he nearly knew their plays by heart. Æschylus appears to have charmed him less. He long continued the practice of making marginal notes in his books, and it is now impossible to tell at what period of his life this or that author was annotated by him. When he died, he had what was then considered a large library; and though his son tells us that when he was young his means were too slender to allow him to buy the best editions, his collection must at his death have been a valuable one. Many of his books are now in the National Library in Paris—most of them were given by his son—some are at Toulouse, and some few are the property of private individuals.

In 1658 Racine left Port-Royal and went to the Collége d'Harcourt in Paris to study philosophy and logic; but he had no taste for either, and he left the place after he had been there a year. About this time he formed the acquaintance of the Abbé Le Vasseur and La Fontaine, neither of whom was a companion such as the Solitaries of Port-Royal would have wished for one of their pupils. At this time, too, when he was about nineteen years of age, he was put under the friendly guardianship of Nicolas Vitart, who was his cousin upon his mother's side. Vitart was fifteen years senior to Racine, and had been one of Claude Lancelot's earliest scholars. He was considered to be Racine's

elderly friend and adviser rather than his guardian in the sense of imposing restraint upon his actions; and the younger man, in mentioning his relative in his letters to his friends, would always give him the title of Monsieur. His letters to his cousin Vitart are pleasant and friendly, but they are not so free and unreserved in expression as his letters to Le Vasseur and to La Fontaine. After leaving the Collége d'Harcourt, Racine seems to have lived some months in Paris; and he became a sort of under financial secretary to the Duke de Luynes, his cousin Vitart holding the first place in that employment. From Paris he went to Chevreuse,—the Luynes and the Chevreuse families having then become united,—to superintend the building alterations that were going on at the chateau. We have a letter from him written at Chevreuse to Le Vasseur, dated "Babylon, 26th January 1661." This was his humorous way of saying that he was a prisoner in exile. His occupation there of superintending the workmen appears to have been very uninteresting to him. In his letter he says,—"I go to the tavern three or four times a-day, to give orders to the workmen, glaziers, and carpenters. They obey me pretty well, and ask me for something to drink when they have done their work. I occupy the room of a duke. So far as regards my magnificence. But in a place like this where there are none but beggars, it is a great thing to be able to go to the tavern: it is not everybody that can do so much. But I have more pleasant occupations, though at first they may appear to be less amusing. I read poetry, and I try to write it. I am now reading the adventures of Ariosto: and I am not without adventures of my own. A lady mistook me

yesterday for a sergeant." But we are left to guess or imagine for ourselves the consequences of the mistake.

An author's life is shown by the work he may leave behind him, and we can in some measure discern his inner life by his mode of doing it. It would be impossible to attempt here to describe Racine's with any sort of fulness. All that can be done is to narrate the main incidents, and to tell them without giving any false colouring of our own. In our estimate of his character we shall have to guard ourselves against prejudice; and some caution to this effect is more necessary with regard to Racine than most other writers. At the outset of his career, in two instances, Racine was guilty of faults of ingratitude against those who had been kind to him. One of these offences, as we shall see presently, was a grave one, and was not repaired until after the lapse of many years; for the other fault we do not know that he ever made amends. Some memory of these will dwell in the minds of those who read the poet's life; but still we should be careful not so to bear them in mind as to influence our appreciation of the poet's genius. There are few foreign authors whose name is so familiar to us in England as his. Our first acquaintance with French poetry is usually made in his pages; and though we are sometimes slow to see the beauty of passages which we have learnt as lessons, yet it is nevertheless true that, given as a writer of pure and of elegant French, Racine is as faultless a model as can be found. Next to those of Corneille—and there are even some critics who prefer Racine to his great predecessor—his plays hold the highest place on the French classic stage. And though our too early acquaintance with them may in many cases

spoil our taste, yet upon a more mature reading—and some of his plays well deserve to be re-read and studied—we shall be more able at once to allow and to understand the high position assigned him by his countrymen.

Before he left Port-Royal, Racine had written some fugitive poetry. These early lucubrations show the affectation that the inexperienced hand had not yet learned to avoid; but they also show the poetical mind and the softness of language that have always characterised his verses. In 1660, on the occasion of Louis XIV.'s marriage, he wrote an ode entitled, "La Nymphe de la Seine." His cousin Vitart showed the manuscript to Chapelain, who was then supposed to know more about poetry than any other man in Paris. Chapelain read the piece, and returned it with the following remark: "This ode is good, and is very poetical. There are many stanzas that could not be better. If the few passages that I have marked are corrected, it will be then a very fine ode." Chapelain was probably right; but if he—who, by the way, has written almost as many verses as Racine himself—had ever done anything so good, we should not have heard so much about him in Boileau's satires. Racine showed himself willing to comply with the instructions given, and in one of his letters says: "The most important alteration was the stanza about Tritons. It appears that Tritons have never lived in the rivers, but only in the sea. Whatever they are, I have wished them all drowned a dozen times over for the trouble they have given me." Perhaps he was not so angry with his Tritons when, upon Chapelain's recommendation, Colbert the Minister sent him 100 louis d'or

as a present from the king. The louis d'or was worth about eleven francs.

About the time that Chapelain was reading the "Nymphe de la Seine," Racine had written a play for one of the theatres. He says, in a letter to Le Vasseur, that its title was "Amasie," and it had been accepted and then rejected by the actors. In those days the actors were the joint proprietors and the managers of their own theatre. Racine does not know the reason of their refusal; but he is "afraid that the actors do not care about *galimatias* nowadays unless it has been written by a great author of repute." This was probably intended as a sly hit at Corneille. We see also that when the public had their choice, they were as hard to please two hundred years ago as they are now. Racine had also written another piece, of which we know even less than of "Amasie." But in his efforts to get his two plays put upon the stage, he came into intercourse with the actors and actresses. When this came to be known to his friends and relations at Port-Royal, they were much distressed. They feared that their pupil, who had done so well while he was under their care, was now in danger of following what they considered a very bad sort of life. They had probably heard enough about Le Vasseur and La Fontaine to know that their companionship was not good for him, and they naturally wished to draw him away from their society. Le Vasseur was not a bad man. He was gay, clever, and lively. He probably thought more of his pleasures than he did of his Church, as was not uncommon with the *abbés* of those days; but we may do Racine the justice to believe that he would not have made a friend of him had he

been a man disposed to evil ways. The idea that we have of La Fontaine is, that he was good-natured, reckless, and absent-minded; but the fabulist, though he was the senior by eighteen years, may very possibly have occasionally beguiled his young friend into amusements that were perhaps not quite to the taste of the Solitaries of Port-Royal.

Racine was fully alive to the necessity of earning his own bread, but he was averse to the means proposed to him for doing so. He had refused to be an advocate. His own tastes were literary; but it is not likely that he thought he could depend entirely upon his pen for his maintenance. The few poems that he had written had been successful, and they had given him a certain reputation among men of letters; but on the other hand, his friends at Port-Royal were extremely anxious about him, and they viewed with distrust any honour that could come to him from writing poetry upon profane subjects. At last he consented to take orders, or at least to go to Uzès in the south of France, and there to put himself under the direction of his uncle, and wait for what could be done for him. This uncle, Antoine Sconin, was a brother of his mother. He was Vicaire-général at Uzès, and he was also a regular canon of Sainte-Geneviève,—a man of good repute in the diocese, who stood well with the bishop; and he hoped that his claims would enable him to provide for his nephew. Racine was as yet only twenty-two; but he might have been tonsured had he not forgotten to bring with him the dimissory letter from the bishop of his own diocese permitting another bishop to consecrate him. This omission, he says, was the fault of a brother of his

uncle's; and he wrote to Vitart in Paris, telling him of the accident, and begging him to have the letter sent after him without delay. Racine remained some twelve or eighteen months at Uzès, and we may presume that he did not thwart his uncle in his endeavours to provide him with a living. So far as we can judge, there seems to have been confidence and good feeling between them. The young man spent a portion of his time in reading theology, and he probably spent a good deal more in reading Greek. While at Uzès, Racine wrote his "Remarks on the Olympiads of Pindar," and also those on the first ten books of Homer's 'Odyssey.' M. Mesnard tells us that his notes on Pindar are such as a student who is desirous of learning the language would naturally make: in them we may trace directly the hand of Claude Lancelot. Pindar is not an easy author, and Racine's annotations are creditable to a young man who had but small means at his disposal. Homer was more to his taste, and his notes on the 'Odyssey' are more copious. He was probably reading Homer for his own amusement: his remarks show that the poem gave him much pleasure, and his comments upon the language prove that his instruction at Port-Royal had been sound. In matters of scholarship it is likely enough that he was more advanced than his former schoolmasters. In the meanwhile his good uncle was unhappy that he could do nothing for him, and even wished to give up his own benefice in his favour. But there were so many encumbrances upon the living in the way of mortgages, debts, &c., that Racine was perhaps prudent in not accepting it. Then Sconin tried to change his own regular benefice for a secular one; but no one

would exchange with him. He made other attempts to provide for his nephew, but they all proved unsuccessful. We may reasonably doubt whether it was ever Racine's ambition to go into the Church. It is much more likely that he allowed himself to be carried on, not wishing to give pain to his friends at Port-Royal, or to show himself ungrateful to his uncle. It is not easy to determine with any certainty the events at this period of his life. The document at the end of the first edition of his "Andromaque," conveying to him the privilege to print, dated 28th December 1667, tells us that he was then "prior" of Epinay. He probably had held the priory for some time before this, and continued to hold it; for it was not necessary that he should previously have taken orders, or have adopted the clerical costume. At last, however, when the moment came in which it was necessary that he should choose, he broke off all connection with the Church, and determined to earn his bread by other means.

Though he had hardly dared to announce his ambition, it had, in truth, early been his desire to make his career in writing for the theatre. "La Thébaïde, ou Les Frères Ennemis," the earliest of his plays that we now possess, was written when he was at Uzès; and that appeared upon the stage in Paris in 1664. But he had before that time written other pieces of poetry, besides religious hymns and the "Nymphe de la Seine." Two of these may be mentioned. One was an ode on the convalescence of the king after his recovery from the measles in 1664, and obtained for him a pension of six hundred francs. His other piece of poetry, "La Renommée aux Muses," won for him the friendship of Boileau. The Abbé Le

Vasseur showed Boileau a copy of the verses, and Boileau —who was three years senior to Racine—wrote some remarks upon them which Racine thought so judicious, that he was anxious to be introduced to his learned critic. Le Vasseur brought the two men together, and they soon formed a friendship which lasted until Racine's death.

It would be as unjust in writing of Racine to say nothing of Boileau, as to leave out all mention of Ulysses in narrating the history of the siege of Troy. Boileau was Racine's friend and trusted counsellor. He boasted, not perhaps without some vanity, that he taught him how to write difficult verses easily. With his own compositions we have now nothing to do; but his name is necessarily mentioned in conjunction with nearly all the writers of the seventeenth century. He was a friend of Corneille and Molière, of La Fontaine and of Racine, and he would have wished that the four poets had always been friends of each other. But literary men, as is the case perhaps with men of other orders of talent, are more disposed to disagree among themselves when their numbers are few than when they are many. Where the competition is wide and the rewards numerous, bickerings and jealousies are less probable than when a few candidates are contending for one prize.

Though "Amasie" had been written, we may regard "La Thébaïde" as Racine's first tragedy. It was accepted by Molière for the Palais Royal Theatre, and it was first played there on the 20th June 1664. Molière was considerably Racine's senior; he had recognised his talents, and he tried to assist him in his early endea-

vours,—doubtless in the hope that Racine might be an acquisition to his theatre, as well as with the idea of benefiting his friend. There is a tradition that he suggested the subject of "La Thébaïde" to Racine for a tragedy, and even went so far as to trace out for him a plan of the principal incidents. It is certain, however, that Molière brought out the play upon his theatre, and that it was played fifteen times. This ought to have been satisfactory to Racine, even though the receipts were small. We have no reason for believing that he was disappointed.

On the 4th of December in the following year the young poet's second tragedy, "Alexandre le Grand," was also brought out by Molière at the same theatre. The receipts taken for the first six representations were very much in advance of those for any of the performances of "La Thébaïde." On the first night there was more money taken at the doors than there had been on any other night at that theatre during that year. But after chronicling the sixth performance, La Grange says in his Register: "This day the troupe was much surprised that the said piece 'Alexander' was played at the theatre of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. As M. Racine had been privy to the scheme, the troupe thought that he had no right to any author's profits because he had behaved so badly in taking his play to the other actors and inducing them to perform his piece. The author's profits we therefore divided among ourselves, and each actor received 47 francs as his share." La Grange is very laconic in his complaint; and so far as we know, his remark is the only protest made by a member of Molière's troupe against Racine's misconduct. The rights

of authors were not so well defined then as they are now, but no excuse can relieve Racine from the imputation of ingratitude. Molière had been very good to him: he had lent him money; he had brought out his first piece and played it fifteen times—certainly with no pecuniary gain to himself; and now, because the young author thought that his new tragedy—which, judging from the receipts, must have attracted the public—was not played in such a way as to gratify his vanity, he brought out his piece upon the stage of a rival theatre at the same time that it was being performed by the company with whom he had come to terms;—and this without giving them the least intimation of his change of purpose.

Racine's conduct was bad; but with that charity which is due to the "genus irritabile vatum," we may find a pardon for him. He had lived long enough to have known better, but he had not written long enough to have learned to check the vexation and wounded vanity natural in a man when he sees his five-act tragedy indifferently performed, and the poetic orations upon which he had piqued himself, badly delivered by incompetent actors. We may take it for granted that for the performance of tragedy the actors of the Palais Royal Theatre were inferior to their rivals at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. We have abundant evidence to show that this was an undoubted fact. And Racine in his anger was prompted by a sudden impulse, caused by his extreme sensitiveness,—a failing which was born in him, and which he retained all through his life. His plays, from "Andromaque" in 1667 to "Phèdre" in 1677, all met with adverse criticism; and we may

perceive how keenly he felt the censure passed upon him, from the bitterness with which he replied to his critics in the prefaces which he put forth. He himself has said that the pain he suffered from the hostile judgments that were passed upon his work more than outbalanced any pleasure he received from the praises of the outside world and the good opinion of his friends. And we may believe that when he said this he was truly expressing what he felt. Racine could not, like Molière, pay back his adversaries in their own coin. He could not, like Molière, cover them with ridicule which all the world would understand. He could not laugh at them, and thoroughly enjoy his own laughter. It was not given to him, when smarting under violent abuse, to sit down and write a playful little comedy like the "Critique de l'École des Femmes." Racine was at times witty, and could also be caustic; but satire, let it be ever so biting, will not be as effective in setting its author right in his own estimation and in that of the world, as that good-humoured banter with which Molière was able to contend with his critics, and with which he always got the better of them.

It has been said before now that intensity is the stamp of genius, and that without intensity genius can hardly exist. We have to acknowledge of our author that whatever may have been the extent of his natural gifts, he was pre-eminently in earnest in his employment of them. Racine gave up his whole mind to whatever he attempted. With him everything is prepared; nothing is loose and careless. In all his writings—in his verse and in his prose—we perceive the grace and the elegance of a scholar. There are instances of poets who,

in what they have written, might have done better had they given themselves more trouble or allowed themselves more time; but one is tempted to think that Racine has done his very best. It was his object to carry his art to the greatest perfection which labour would enable him to achieve. He is essentially French, as Milton is essentially English. Neither were men whose minds were cosmopolitan. The works of neither have been understood by readers of all nations, as have been those of Shakespeare, Molière, and Cervantes. There have been a few men in the large republic of letters—their number is not very many—who have unconsciously but instinctively taken for their motto the line of Terence, "Homo sum: nihil humani a me alienum puto." Neither Racine nor Milton can be put into this class; and it is not likely that either would have desired it. A parallel between them would not bear examination: but there is something in common to them in their inaptitude to suit the taste of every reader. English students of Racine have sometimes considered him artificial and stilted; but if they would search deeper, they would find a delicacy of expression which bespeaks the true genius. He has also been judged to be cold; but whatever may be his faults or his drawbacks, this epithet applied to him is the most unmeaning. If expression of purpose be considered among the gifts of a great poet, Racine will be found to hold a high place in European literature. The passionate invective of Hermione in "Andromaque," and the abject shame felt by Phædra, in the play of "Phèdre," together with the sense of bitterness that accompanies it, move us to sorrow and almost to pity

for the unfortunate woman, and inspire in us feelings of compassion and of sympathy for her who has been so basely abandoned. If a poet has so written as to create sentiments reciprocal with his own in the mind of the reader, he cannot assuredly have laboured in vain. Sainte-Beuve, writing about forty years ago, said that Racine's verse runs close along by the side of prose. The remark may be just; but it might be applied with greater force and greater severity to much that has been written since that time by men of high poetical reputation both in England and in France. Racine's main defect was in the want of high creative power. He imitates and perfects the ideas of others more easily than he invents. His poetry, therefore, lacks much of the freshness and vigour natural to a man who has been inspired by his own thoughts.

His intensity, like that of some other men, frequently shows itself in his bitterness. His Hermione and his Athaliah are both bitter in their reproaches. So was Milton bitter; and Dante, intenser still, was bitterest of all. Racine's power of grasp over what he could touch was very firm, but he could not handle many objects at once and work them into one harmonious whole. Knowing his own weakness, he simplified as much as possible the plots of his tragedies by not attempting by-play, dealing with but few characters, and amongst these confining to one or two all the real action of his drama. This was his most frequent practice, but in "Andromaque" and "Athalie" the plots are more open and the interest wider than in his other tragedies. In each of these plays there are four characters who have a real part to perform,—or, as the actor would feel, they

are beings with a life and existence of their own. It is common in all French tragedy to reduce the events of interest into a narrower compass than is required on our stage. There should be naturally in every drama a unity of interest; but the writers of tragedy in France have so rigidly adhered to the law as coming from Aristotle, that the spectator feels himself to be imprisoned, and to be moved by a strong desire to cut away the structure though it has been built up for his amusement. The great Condé said one day as he came out of the theatre, —"I may congratulate the Abbé d'Aubignac for having followed all the laws of Aristotle, but I cannot forgive Aristotle for having made the Abbé d'Aubignac write such a detestable tragedy." Whatever effect the laws of the unities may have had upon Corneille, it would seem as though they were specially made for Racine. These rules were to him as the lines in a copy-book are to a boy learning to write. They were at once his guide and his support. They were to him landmarks beyond which he could not travel without getting upon dangerous ground. Nature had not gifted him largely with imaginative powers, but inside his boundaries his strength was often very great. And it must be said of him that he has shown himself grateful, and known how to take the best advantage of the proffered aid.

Racine's mind was cast in too delicate a mould to bear with equanimity the troubles and annoyances incident to the career he had chosen for himself. His sensitiveness—a quality common, perhaps, to all poets—was so great as to be a fault in his character, and to be a real drawback to his happiness in life. It was, however,

to this power of being able to feel acutely that we may trace both the softness and the incision of his language, and also the sharpness and the biting nature of his epigrams. As all these epigrams depend upon circumstances of the time which do not especially concern us, and would therefore require explanation, and as their force is often shown in a dexterous use of words, it would be fruitless to endeavour to reproduce them. The charm of wit is in its flash; when the sparkle is gone it is flavourless. Boileau, a satirist by profession, though not an ill-natured one, and nearly always writing in a good cause, acknowledged that Racine's power of raillery was greater than his own. Racine's aunt, Agnès Racine, had written to him from Port-Royal, imploring him to drop all future intercourse with people connected with the theatre.[1] Her language to her nephew was tender and sorrowful, and also very vehement against those whom she thought to be leading an unholy life. If Racine ever answered his aunt, his reply has not reached us. The letter made him no doubt very angry, and was probably rankling in his mind when he quarrelled with his old friends at Port-Royal.

This incident in Racine's life should be briefly mentioned. Nicole, one of Racine's former masters at Port-Royal, had answered a foolish pamphlet of one Desmarets, who thirty years previously had been a writer of novels and plays for the theatres, and had afterwards suddenly repented of his former life and become an ardent devotee. Desmarets was very antagonistic to the

[1] M. Paul Mesnard thinks that this letter was written in 1663, but he says that its date is very uncertain. It has been placed by one editor of Racine's works as late as 1665 or 1666.

Jansenists, and publicly accused them of heresy. Nicole in his reply taunted him with his former profession, and boldly denounced all novel-writers and playwrights as public malefactors. Racine thought that his old master had purposely intended to censure him, Nicole's answer having appeared just as Racine had in a fit of temper taken his play "Alexandre" away from the Palais Royal Theatre; and he wrote two letters against the Solitaries, who formerly had been so kind to him. Happily the first of these letters only was printed. They were both thoroughly ill-natured, dictated by anger, disappointment, and vanity, and they contained a strength of satire against Port-Royal such as the world had not seen since Pascal ten years earlier had attacked the Jesuits. The Solitaries of the monastery were galled to the quick to find that one of their own pupils should have abused his talents by trying to bring discredit on them to whom he owed so much. Racine would certainly have published his second letter, to which he even added a preface, intending that the two letters and the preface should appear together, if Boileau had not begged him not to add fresh wounds to those he had already made. "This letter," Boileau said to him, "may do credit to your intellect, but certainly none at all to your heart." Irritable as Racine's disposition was, he was by nature docile, simple-minded, and tender-hearted. He submitted to the advice of his friend, and he stopped the sale as far as he was able of the first letter, and his second letter was not published until after his death. Later in life, when present at one of the sittings of the Academy, a garrulous member taunted him by alluding to the long-forgotten occurrence, and Racine replied to him, "Yes, sir;

you are perfectly right. That is the most disgraceful spot in my life, and I would now give my heart's blood if I could efface it."

In November 1667, Racine's "Andromaque" was played at the Hôtel de Bourgogne Theatre; and Mlle. du Parc, at his instigation, had left the Palais Royal Theatre to take the part of Andromache in the new play. Racine, as has been said, had already quarrelled with Molière, and he was now unfortunately widening the breach that he himself had made. But the new piece was in every way a success, and he was justly proud of his triumph. Of all his classical tragedies, "Andromaque" will perhaps command our sympathies more fully than any other. It is less stiff and stately, and the plot is wider and more open than was usual with him. We are moved to pity for the afflicted widow, while our hearts are given to her younger rival. Hermione is the best character in the play. The late George Henry Lewes, than whom no one was a more qualified judge, has said that Hermione was the finest of all Racine's characters, though he did not think that "Andromaque" was his finest play. Some readers may feel themselves more interested in Phædra, and think that her more highly finished character is better deserving of notice. The two women are very different. The Hermiones have always existed, and, exception made for sword and dagger, doubtless do still exist at the present day. We may be proud and pleased to know them; but there are very few of us who would wish to become acquainted with a Phædra. The character of Hermione is full of passion, but at the same time soft and feminine. Much has been said about the rage of Pyrrhus in this play.

But his anger is simply that of a man who does not know his own mind. He is obstinate because he is irresolute. It was doubtless Racine's intention to make him weak and fickle. Orestes is a much finer character. He is violent from true passion. His passion is not always well directed, and though its effect is sometimes marred by maudlin or by bombastic language, yet we feel for him, and our desires are that he may gain his cause. The character has always been a favourite one with actors, and it was in playing this part that Talma made one of his great successes. Montfleury, the first actor who played this part, died from the effects of over-exerting himself in trying to personate the fury of Orestes in the last act of the play.

"Les Plaideurs," Racine's only comedy, was performed in the autumn or early winter of 1668. The satire is directed against the lawyers, a class whom Molière up to that time had spared. When he was at Uzès, Racine had held a benefice for a short time, but his good fortune did not last long. An action of ejectment was brought against him; and the case lasted so long, no one seeming to be able to unravel the rights of the matter, that at last it died from inanition. Now Racine was taking his revenge. At first the "Plaideurs" was not successful; people did not see the wit, and they did not laugh at it. Racine says,—"They criticised my little play as though it had been a tragedy; and those who were the most pleased were afraid not to have laughed according to rule. They took it ill that I had not tried to make them laugh with more serious matter." But, in fact, the fun in the comedy was not that broad open humour to which the theatre-going public had lat-

terly been accustomed, and there were allusions in the piece which many did not understand. But the king, when he saw the play, enjoyed it thoroughly. His courtiers followed suit; and when it became known that his Majesty had laughed, there were few who had not the good taste to follow his example.

"Britannicus" was first played in December 1669, and Racine tells us that he took more pains with this than with any of his other tragedies. Voltaire has called it "la pièce des connoisseurs." The description thus given seems a very just one. "Britannicus" is not a play so well suited for representation on the stage as for reading in the closet. The versification is as perfect as in any play in the French language. Boileau said that Racine had never before written verses that were so sententious—that is, verses containing so much meaning, and the meaning so justly expressed. But while we accept Boileau's decision, it is impossible for us not to remember that the greatest perfection in language will not make a fine tragedy. A tragedy may contain many verses that are fine, or grand, or charming, and yet be a poor stage-play; a man may be a perfect elocutionist, and but an indifferent actor. Voltaire probably meant no more than that the piece was not one to be appreciated by the crowd. "Britannicus" is certainly wearisome. Racine took the incidents from Tacitus, and when reading the play we feel as if we were reading history. No one ever felt this in reading Shakespeare's "King John." Yet of all Racine's male characters, Nero is one of the best drawn. He is the foremost character in this play, and he overshadows all the others. His tyranny makes itself felt so strongly as to enable us to think of nothing

else. This ought to inspire us with compassion for the objects of his cruelty, but in fact we are scarcely made acquainted with them. Britannicus himself is a poor creature, so weak as hardly to deserve our compassion. Agrippina is the next foremost personage. She reminds us of Andromache, whom we shall see hereafter; but she fails to strike us as does Hector's afflicted widow. The tragedy was poorly welcomed when it made its appearance; and in his first preface, Racine shows his disappointment in the bitterness with which he answers his critics. He says: "I pity the ill-luck of a man who has to work for the public. The people who really see our faults most plainly are also the most willing to excuse them. They forgive us the passages they do not like because of those which give them pleasure. But there is no one so unjust as an ignorant man. He always thinks that applause is the sign of a want of knowledge. He will condemn a whole play because of one scene of which he does not approve. He will cry out against all the fine passages, to make people believe that he is a wit; and if we differ from him, he puts us down as being vain and presumptuous.

'Homine imperito nunquam quidquam injustius.'"

Racine, no doubt, was here expressing his opinion of the criticisms that had been passed upon his play.

The next four of Racine's tragedies are deservedly the least well known. It has already been related in the Biographical Notice of Corneille how the elder and the younger poet were, unknown to each other, engaged to write a tragedy upon the farewell parting of Titus and Berenice. The subject was not happily chosen, but

the advantages in the contest were in Racine's favour; and the victory, if it might be so called, was gained by him. There is little to be said in favour of "Bérénice." The parting of two lovers is a poor subject for a tragedy; but it may be allowed that with such slight materials Racine did all that could be expected from him. His play pleased the people, and was therefore successful. But those who recollected "Andromaque" were disappointed; and Racine, wishing to learn from a friend his "candid opinion," pressed him to say what he thought of "Bérénice." When the friend found that he could no longer avoid the question, he answered by repeating the words of an old song—

"Marion pleure, Marion crie,
Marion veut qu'on la marie."

The criticism was excellent; Racine at once perceived its truth, and said nothing more on the matter.

"Bajazet" followed "Bérénice" in 1672, and that again was followed by "Mithridate" in 1673; and it is to be feared that all these plays would prove very dull reading. "Bajazet" is of course Turkish, and the scene is laid in the seraglio at Constantinople. Segrais, an author of the time, relates in his book of literary anecdotes that as he was sitting close to Corneille in the theatre while "Bajazet" was being played, the old poet whispered to him,—"I should not say what I thought to any one but to you, because it would be thought that I was jealous; but mark my word, there is not a single character in 'Bajazet' with the sentiments of a man in Constantinople. They all wear Turkish dresses, but think as does a Frenchman in the centre of France." Corneille's

opinion was no doubt just; but similar criticism might have been equally well applied to many of his own tragedies, and to the plays of nearly every dramatic writer.

Perhaps of all Racine's plays "Mithridate" is the most dull and most uninteresting. Mithridates himself is a bully. He says to Monime, the woman whose affections he would win, "From what a high position have I deigned to come down to place you on a throne to which you did not dare to aspire." Monime herself is a virtuous doll. Her goodness is the goodness to be found in a copy-book. We do not feel pity for her in her misfortunes, but only contempt for her tyrant. It would be difficult for us now to imagine how, beyond a sort of curiosity, "Mithridate" could give any pleasure to an audience of the present day.

The story of Iphigenia is so well known that it need not be now repeated. But the ancient authors are not agreed as to her sacrifice. Most of them believed that she really perished on the altar. Euripides and Ovid suppose that Diana had compassion on her, and substituted a goat in her place. In his tragedy, Racine has followed a third version, which he declares to be no less ancient than the two others. He has caused a princess of the name of Iphigenia to be sacrificed, but not the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. His victim was the daughter of Theseus and Helen, and she is introduced into the play as Eriphyle. Theseus, as we know, had a good many wives; and we are told that Helen did not acknowledge Iphigenia, because she did not dare to confess to Menelaus that she had been secretly married to Theseus. "Iphigénie" is not a play altogether agreeable to English taste. Clytemnestra is the

best character; some of the lines put into her mouth are really very fine. Our notions of Homer are different from French notions. According to our ideas, Racine's Greeks are unlike the Greeks that fought before the siege of Troy, and consequently we do not admire his Greek characters. In the second scene of the second act, Iphigenia first meets her father, and the description of their meeting shows some of the weak points in French tragedy. The girl comes in and is very eloquent; her discourse is altogether formal. It is as though a princess were to meet her father when he is holding his *levée* and is surrounded by his courtiers. On the other hand, Agamemnon, after she has finished her first exordium, says to her, "Come, my child, and kiss your father; he will always love you." This little bit of nature, showing itself out of the upholstery of the situation,—this exclamation, uttered without regard to formality, followed as it is by her continued address, makes us smile, and shocks us by its incongruity.

About the same time that "Iphigénie" was produced on the stage, Racine was admitted into the French Academy. Fléchier, the celebrated preacher and orator, was also admitted on the same day. In the discourse which it has been always customary for each new member to make after his reception, the churchman pleased all his hearers by his manner and by his power of eloquence; but Racine disappointed everybody. This was the more remarkable, because it was well known that he read his own pieces with perfect effect, and that he took great pains—which, as a rule, were successful—to teach the actors how to recite his set speeches and his long soliloquies. We have no means of judging what he said

when he took his place in the Academy, as his harangue has not been preserved. Later in life, when he delivered a discourse on the reception of the Abbé Colbert, and again in the reception of Thomas Corneille—admitted in the place of his brother Pierre—he was completely successful.

It will probably be admitted that the characters in "Andromaque" and in "Phèdre" are more natural and less stilted than in Racine's other classical plays. This opinion is, upon the whole, justified by the number of times that each of the plays has been performed. We find that from the year 1680 to the end of February 1873, "Phèdre" has been played 893 times in Paris, "Andromaque" 744, "Iphigénie" 733, "Britannicus" 631, "Mithridate" 473, "Athalie" 401, "Bajazet" 373, "Esther" 151, and "Bérénice" 138. But the comedy "Les Plaideurs" counts 1082 representations, or nearly 200 more than "Phèdre." With regard to "Esther" and to "Athalie," it should be remembered that they were sacred tragedies, and would probably on that account be less popular than the others, and also that neither play was acted in public until after the death of Louis XIV. in 1715.

Without determining whether "Phèdre" or "Andromaque" is the better play, we can see that "Phèdre" is more easily put upon the stage. As in "Hamlet," there is one character which overrides all the others. The disproportion is not so marked in the French as in the English play, but the main interest is centred in Phædra. In "Andromaque" there are four characters who all claim our attention; and there is therefore the difficulty of finding four actors to play these parts

satisfactorily. We may allow that the part of Hermione demands from the actress more varied powers than that of Phædra. Phædra, as we see her, is borne down by her own misery and the sense of shame consequent upon her guilt. Occasionally she rises to passion, but her anger is subdued by her fear. The unfortunate woman feels her crime to be so heavy upon her that she cannot raise her head. She is not a good woman. Nothing, indeed, could make her good,—nor even honest. Her sin is painted in the blackest colours, and is odious to us. Nevertheless Racine has inspired us with a feeling of pity for the wretched creature; he has so interested us in her sorrows, that we wish, after her story shall have been told, that she should die without further torment. There is perhaps in all French dramatic literature no character so intense in its nature as that of Phædra. Corneille has certainly nothing equal to it. The Alceste of Molière's "Misanthrope" has something of the same overwhelming force of feeling; but Alceste throughout is sinned against instead of sinning, which changes the position.

"Phèdre" first appeared on New Year's Day in 1677, and for a while it seemed as if the new tragedy was going to be a failure. A cabal was got up against Racine as soon as the subject of his tragedy was known. The plot was laid at the Hôtel de Bouillon. The hostess collected her friends around her, and they tried to devise a scheme for Racine's perdition. The Duchesse de Bouillon, one of Mazarin's nieces, had been a Mancini, and she was well able to put herself at the head of such an undertaking. Among Madame de Bouillon's friends was Madame Deshoulières. She was a woman

of the world who wrote verses, and set herself up as a wit. And there was one Pradon, a third-rate poet, who counted himself among her admirers; and she in turn recommended him to Madame de Bouillon as a fit antagonist for Racine. Pradon, flattered and made much of by the two great ladies, wrote a tragedy, taking as his subject the story of Phædra and Hippolytus. He had only three months allowed to him; but doubting nothing, he began and finished his task with perfect self-satisfaction. It was known that Racine's play was to be performed at the Théâtre de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne on the first day of January; Pradon's play was to have come out at the Théâtre Guénégaud on the same day, but for some reason it was not ready until the 3d of the month. The idea was, to do all that was possible to damage the success of Racine's piece. We are told that Madame de Bouillon hired all the boxes on the first tier in both houses for the first six nights,—that in the Théâtre Guénégaud, where Pradon's play was being acted, the boxes were all filled, and that in the rival house they were left altogether empty. This ingenious device cost 15,000 livres, — or what would be equivalent to nearly £3000 at the present day. For the first few nights the success was all upon the side of Pradon. Racine was spoken of as being in a state of despair. But Pradon's triumph lasted only as long as Madame de Bouillon could afford to show her spite. When her money came to an end, Pradon became as ridiculous as Racine had been made unhappy.

Racine suffered very bitterly from the injustice of the attack made against him. Boileau on this as on other occasions proved himself to be Racine's good friend.

He tried to console the unhappy poet, saying that the public would soon appreciate the difference between his lines and those of Pradon. He wrote his seventh Epistle, and dedicated it to Racine as a public testimony of his esteem; and he succeeded in persuading Antoine Arnauld, the great theological controversialist, and Nicole, who has been already mentioned as one of Racine's masters at Port-Royal, to read "Phèdre," assuring them that they might accept the tragedy as a proof that the author was a man of high repute. And he undertook, on Racine's behalf, that an apology should be made for the letter against the Solitaries of Port-Royal, written ten years back, on condition that they would on their part forgive the offender. Nicole, who had a fond remembrance of his former pupil, was glad to forget old animosities. But Arnauld bore in mind the bitterness with which Racine had spoken of his sister, and was not at first willing to forgive him. He consented, however, to read the tragedy, which he afterwards spoke of as containing an admirable moral lesson—adding by way of criticism, "But why did he make Hippolytus in love?" He evidently recollected the play of Euripides that he had read in his youth, and he did not like his old familiar ideas to be disturbed. The reconciliation was at last brought about, much to the comfort of the repentant poet.

"Phèdre" was the last of Racine's classical tragedies, and he wrote no other verses until Madame de Maintenon asked him twelve years afterwards—in 1689—to write a play for the girls in the convent of Saint-Cyr. In 1677 he was only thirty-eight years of age, and no satisfactory reason can be urged for his sudden deter-

mination to abandon a profession by which he had earned for himself a great reputation—at a time, too, when his faculties were unimpaired, and when there was, as he well knew, no rival to dispute with him the foremost place. But there were various causes combined together, each of which seemed to bring about such a resolution. His extreme sensitiveness, and the pain that he suffered from what he felt to be unjustly hostile criticism—especially the attack upon his last play — were doubtless among the reasons that determined him. He was not a vain man; but he knew his own powers well enough to be aware of his superiority over Pradon. He would have been glad that Pradon should succeed to the extent of his merit; but it was grievous to him that a third-rate versifier should have been able by fraudulent practices to obtain an advantage over his own honest labour. Racine was like many other men in the world, who, when hardships are dealt to them unfairly by their fellow-creatures, have not the courage to stand up against the storm, trusting to their own truth and to the justness of their cause.

About this time Racine and Boileau were both made historiographers to the king, with a salary to each of 4000 livres a-year attaching to the office. This, too, helped to induce him to give up his profession as a dramatist. Boileau also, for the first twelve or thirteen years after his new appointment, published nothing fresh. He wrote only the last two cantos to his poem, "Le Lutrin." There is reason also to believe that Racine's reconciliation with his Port-Royalist friends helped to give him a distaste for the theatre. He became an ardent devotee, and would have made himself a Car-

thusian friar, had not his spiritual confessor, with much wisdom, advised him rather to marry a pious-minded woman — adding that the companionship of such a wife would keep him from the society of people whom he wished to avoid, and that an eager and ardent temperament such as his would not long be able to bear the austerities and the privations of monastic life. Racine took the advice, and on the 1st of June 1677 married Catherine de Romanet, a woman of good family who had some small fortune of her own. We hear very little about Racine's wife. At the time of her marriage, she was completely ignorant as to what her husband had written; and even at his death, if we may believe her son, she knew of his tragedies only by their names. The poet himself had always been very little disposed to talk about his work, and during the last twenty years of his life the disinclination grew upon him more strongly. It is nevertheless impossible for us to imagine that an ambitious and proud man, as was Racine, should have looked back upon his "Andromaque" and his "Phèdre" with regret. And if he has said or written anything that would seem to convey such a meaning, his words ought not to be taken in strict evidence against himself. As we read "Esther" and "Athalie," we see that no other hand than his could have written the well-turned lines. We perceive that his fire was again aroused, and that he was then as fully determined as before to exert himself to the utmost.

A few words may be said as to the charge of hypocrisy that has been brought against Racine because he ceased to write for the stage from religious scruples, but nevertheless became an assiduous courtier when Louis XIV.

appointed him one of his historiographers. The accusation appears to have been unfounded. His new duties took up much of his time. Both he and Boileau, his companion in office, were exact in doing that which was required of them. Racine had given proof of his abilities as a poet, and he was now minded to write a history of the reign of the then present king, and to devote to the work all his energies. So much may be guessed with tolerable certainty. We do not know how far Racine carried out his project; for there is reason to believe that many of his papers were destroyed by fire at Saint-Cloud in January 1726. All the history of his life shows him to have been ambitious, but we have no evidence of his hypocrisy. Though no doubt a courtier, he was frank and outspoken, taking a keen interest in whatever he did. Whatever his purpose might be, he acted always with energy, and was free from pretence. Those who dislike the man will dislike also the religious side of his character; but he did not affect to be other than he was. To many of us Racine would not have been a sympathetic companion, especially in the early part of his life when his spirit was bitter; but after his marriage he seems to have been a simple-hearted, upright, honest man, who was much attached to his wife and children, and who took his chief delight in being at home and having them about him.

Racine, as has been said, wrote his "Esther" to order for Madame de Maintenon. He began the piece in the latter half of the year 1688, and the first performance took place at the end of January 1689. There had not long before been founded an establishment at

Saint-Cyr, then called the Maison de Saint-Louis, for the education of girls, in which Madame de Maintenon took much interest. The pupils were the daughters of poor people of good family, and were educated under her supervision. The girls used from time to time to recite different plays, principally the tragedies of Corneille and of Racine; but they had acted Racine's "Andromaque" with so much ardour, and had shown so much appreciation of the beauty of the pathetic passages, that it was thought unadvisable that their performances of this play should be repeated. Our poet was therefore requested to write a little play for the girls that should be consistent with the general plan of their education, — a play that might be given to them to learn as an amusement rather than a task. When the request was made to Racine, he immediately asked Boileau his advice as to what he ought to do. Boileau knew well that anything written by Racine would be recognised immediately, and fearing that his friend in what he might so do would fall below his usual standard, advised him to refuse. Had the request not been made by Madame de Maintenon, Racine would probably have declined to entertain it; but he was afraid of displeasing. He therefore determined to write a play that might be fit for the girls, and to put into it such poetry as would not lower his own name. The success of the piece—"Esther," as it was called—went beyond Racine's most sanguine expectations. The music, composed by Moreau for the choruses, was spoken of as being one of the great attractions of the piece. Whatever we might now think of Moreau's music, it pleased when it was written. It has been said

truly enough that "Esther" is not very aptly called a tragedy. It is rather a story taken from the Old Testament and put into action. Its main charm is in the ideas conveyed, and in the language; and we shall best appreciate it as we read it quietly for our own amusement and gratification.

"Athalie," like "Esther," was written for the girls of Saint-Cyr. Racine, finding that the smaller piece had been received so well, determined to write a tragedy for the same performers with a wider scope. In the arrangement of incident and the conduct of the drama, "Athalie" is Racine's finest tragedy. Here, as in his "Andromaque," the incident is not confined to one or two personages. Jehoida, the high priest; Abner, the warrior; Athaliah, the wicked queen; and Mattan, her priest,—are all characters that stand by themselves, and leave each his own impression on the hearer or reader. Of the four, the high priest is the best. He and Nero in "Britannicus" are the only two of Racine's male characters that are altogether satisfactory. As for Athaliah herself, we may now be tempted to feel that we do not see quite enough of her. But it was the object of the dramatist to create in the minds of the spectators, and of the young people for whom the play was written, a horror of the wicked queen, rather than to expose her wickedness too visibly. And it may be a question whether Scripture subjects are not unfitted for stage representation, because they demand from us too great solemnity. In our desire not to be irreverent, we become over grave; the actors in front of us are grave, and everything appears dismal and gloomy.

Racine's "Athalie" and Corneille's "Polyeucte" may

partly serve to show us how different were the two men, one from the other. It is natural to us to try to draw comparisons between great contemporary writers. We thus exercise our faculties, and we gain some amusement. But the likeness that may once have seemed to be strong will often strangely dwindle down into singularly small proportions. La Bruyère has said, speaking of our two authors, that "Corneille painted men as they ought to be, and Racine men as they are." The remark is not very profound, as is usually the case with judgments delivered oracularly and in the form of aphorism. In "Polyeucte" we recognise the work of a larger and more comprehensive mind than in "Athalie;" we feel also that Corneille, in giving to Pauline strong womanly charms, has thereby enlisted our more popular sympathies. Racine, following the instructions that were given to him, has made the interest in his drama wholly religious; but he has given to each one of his personages a firmer character and position of his own, and he has brought about the incidents in the play, joining them and fitting them together, with greater administrative skill than ever was the case with Corneille.

"Athalie" was represented at Saint-Cyr and at Versailles in 1691, and was printed in the same year; but neither that play nor "Esther" was performed upon a public theatre in Paris until after the reign of Louis XIV. As a drama, "Athalie" gives us a graphic picture of the determination of the high priest to get the better of the queen, who had usurped the throne, and of his earnest endeavour to bring up the infant king in the right worship, and to preserve him

from the dominion of Baal. There is a fine scene in which the child Joash is confronted with the queen. She had gone to see the boy; and as he stands before her boldly answering her questions, we see in his victory over her the good effect of his master's teaching. He has learnt right from wrong, and knows how to speak out fearlessly, and to tell the goodness and the justice of his God. It was to teach this lesson that the play was written; and nowhere has Racine achieved his purpose with a finer or more real dramatic success, nor is there in any of his tragedies so much majesty or so much simple grandeur.

Racine died on the 21st of April 1699, and there is little in the last few years of his life that calls for special notice. Shortly before his death he wrote an 'Abridgment of the History of Port-Royal.' This is an account of the troubles that the inhabitants of the monastery, both male and female, had to undergo at the hands of the Jesuits, and of the efforts made by the Jesuits to bring discredit upon their institution. Into these events it is not our province to enter, but Racine's 'Abrégé de l'Histoire de Port-Royal' may be read with pleasure as a specimen of simple and elegant French prose. The style is often old-fashioned and peculiar; we find in it at the same time the straightforward method of Pascal and the ornate language with which we have become acquainted in the "Télémaque" of Fénelon.

Racine, indeed, was a most skilful master with his pen in prose as well as in verse. It is his poetical works that we are now mainly considering, and of them enough has already been said; but his short history of Port-Royal would alone be sufficient to establish his posi-

tion as a writer of prose in the seventeenth century. At the time it was written, there were very few of the forty Academicians whose prose compositions were superior. In the two Academical harangues of Racine's that have been preserved, we find the same easy flow of words,—each sentence and each word carrying with it the full meaning that its author intended to convey. There have been men endowed with higher poetical powers than Racine, but few have succeeded better in perfecting the talents that nature had given to them. As a dramatist, if he does not always command our sympathies, every one who studies him carefully will allow that he was a perfect master of his own language.

CHAPTER II.

ANDROMAQUE.

THE scene of this play is laid in the palace of Pyrrhus at Buthrotum, the capital of Epirus. There Pyrrhus, Achilles's son, holds his court; and he retains in his palace as his captives Andromache and her son Astyanax. She is the widow of Hector, whom Achilles had killed at the siege of Troy. Pyrrhus has conceived a violent passion for this unhappy woman, notwithstanding his formal betrothal to Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus and Helen. Hermione has been sent by her father from Sparta to Epirus purposely to be married to Pyrrhus, whom she loves; and on her arrival in Pyrrhus's palace, she finds that he is attached to another woman. Her passionate resentment does not, however, vanquish her love; and though her pride is in arms, yet she lingers, hoping to see Pyrrhus return to her; while, on the other hand, she coldly does justice to her cousin Orestes, the son of Agamemnon, who loves her. These are the four principal personages in the play, and they are all involved in the fatal web. Pyrrhus loves Andromache, Hermione loves Pyrrhus, and Orestes loves Hermione. Racine has been censured for the complex

nature of his plot. Fault has been found with him in that the triple intrigue gives rise to conflicting interests, and that therefore the laws of the unities are not properly observed. The reader who studies the play will hardly find the censure to be merited. The separate intrigues do not contradict each other; the interests clash as a matter of course, but they are all of the same nature, they all point the same way, and the harmony of the action is not disturbed.

The first act opens with a scene between Orestes and his friend Pylades. Orestes confesses that he has not conquered his love for Hermione, and that all his efforts not to think of her have been useless. He is now in Epirus because he has been chosen by the Greeks as their ambassador to represent to Pyrrhus their great dissatisfaction at hearing that he is about to marry Andromache and to protect Astyanax, her son and the son of Hector. Orestes will be faithful to his mission, but he hopes also to be able to move towards him the heart of Hermione. He tells Pylades that Menelaus is complaining that Pyrrhus should so long defer marrying his daughter, and that he himself in his desperate state means to seek out Hermione, and if she will not consent to fly with him, to die at her feet. He asks Pylades whether Hermione has still influence over Pyrrhus, or whether Pyrrhus will consent to give back to him the prize he has so unjustly taken from him. Pylades can give Orestes no hope. The king, he says, is cold to Hermione, but she loves him; and every time he comes to her she welcomes him, under the belief that he has given up Andromache. Pylades warns his friend that Pyrrhus is not a man on whom one can depend; he may in a fit

of temper marry the woman he hates, and punish her whom he loves.

Orestes then presents himself before Pyrrhus, and delivers his commission. The ambassador is eloquent and impassioned, and rises to the importance of his subject. The harmonious disposition of words is here very remarkable:—

"*Orestes.* Before the voice of all the Greeks is heard through my lips, let me, sire, congratulate myself upon their choice, and express my joy to behold Achilles's son and Ilium's conqueror. Like his exploits, we admire your glorious deeds: Hector fell under his hand, Troy has fallen under yours. And by happy boldness you have shown that only Achilles's son can take his father's place. But Greece with grief sees you do what he never did—succour the fallen fortunes of the Trojan blood, and, moved by a fatal pity, support the survivors of so long a war. Have you forgotten, sire, who Hector was? Our enfeebled tribes recollect him still; his name makes our wives and daughters shudder. There is not in Greece one family but demands from this unhappy boy a reckoning for the husband or father slain by Hector's hand. Who knows what this boy may not one day do? Like his father, we may see him enter our ports and burn our ships. Dare I, prince, say what I think?—it is that, yourself, you fear the recompense of your cares; you dread lest this serpent whom you are cherishing in your bosom may one day turn and sting you. Satisfy, then, the wish of every Grecian heart. Assure to them their vengeance, and to yourself your life. Destroy an enemy so much the more dangerous, that before attacking them he will begin with you.

Pyrrhus. Greece disturbs herself too much on my behalf. I supposed her occupied, my lord, with more important cares; and by the name of her ambassador, I expected to hear of greater projects. Who would think such a task worthy of Agamemnon's son, or that an entire nation so

often victorious should deign to conspire the death of an infant? To whom am I to sacrifice him? Has Greece still a claim upon his life? and am I, alone of all the Greeks, forbidden to decide the fate of a prisoner whom destiny has placed in my hands? Yes, prince, when under the burning walls of Troy the conquerors divided their prey, Fate, whose laws were then fulfilled, placed Andromache and her son into my hands. Hecuba with Ulysses' side ended her misery. Cassandra followed your father into Argos. Did I put forth claims upon their captives? Have I disposed of the fruits of their exploits? They fear that through Hector Troy may live again, and that Hector's son may rob me of the life I permit him to retain. So much prudence, my lord, draws with it too much care; I cannot foresee misfortunes so far ahead. I recall to mind what this town was once—so proud in her ramparts, so full of heroes, mistress of Asia; and I consider what was the lot of Troy, and what is now her destiny. I see them only towns in ashes, a river made red with blood, great fields laid waste and desolate, a child in captivity; and I cannot believe that Troy can dream of vengeance. If Hector's son were to die, why have we for one whole year deferred it? Why was he not in Priam's bosom slain? He might have been buried with so many other dead under Trojan walls. Everything was lawful then: old age and childhood pleaded their weakness in vain. Victory and Night, more cruel than we, excited us to murder, and confounded our blows. My rage against the vanquished was then too fierce; but must my cruelty outlive my anger? In spite of the pity that seized me, must I bathe myself at leisure in this child's blood? No, my lord; let the Greeks seek other prey, let them pursue elsewhere the relics of Troy. The course of my anger is spent; Epirus shall save what Troy has left unhurt."

Orestes still urges upon Pyrrhus the necessity of killing Astyanax; he reminds him how the crafty mother had before caused a false Astyanax to be sacrificed in

place of her son. The Greeks are imperative, he says, in their demands for Hector's blood. He has slain many of them, and they feel that his son should die for his offences. Pyrrhus refuses to destroy the child. If the Greeks persist in demanding his death, "let them come here," he says, "and in Epirus seek another Troy." Aware of Orestes's passion for Hermione, and of their close kinship, he tells him he may see fair Helen's daughter; and then he dismisses the ambassador as he bids him announce to the Greeks his determination not to comply with their demands.

Andromache then joins Pyrrhus. She is allowed to see her son once in the day, and she is going to mourn with him and to embrace him. Pyrrhus tells her that he fears the Greeks will before long give her deeper trouble than that which now afflicts her; their hatred for Hector is not yet extinct; they dread his son, and they have sent Orestes to him to demand his life. "Worthy object of their fear!" she replies—"a child that does not know that Pyrrhus is his master, or that he was Hector's son. And you will pronounce this cruel judgment?" Pyrrhus assures her that he has refused the Greeks, and that though they were to send against him a thousand ships, or shed as much blood as had been shed for Helen, or burn his palace to ashes, he would still protect the boy at the risk of his life. He takes advantage of this promise to plead his suit:—

"And you, in the midst of all these dangers which I risk for your sake, will you refuse me a glance of kindness? Hated by the Greeks, pressed on all sides, will you too be cruel? I offer you my arm: may I not hope that you will

accept a heart that adores you, and that while I am fighting for your welfare I need not count you as my enemy?"

Andromache has no wish to become Pyrrhus's wife. She reminds him that their marriage would be unworthy of them both; and pleading for herself and for her son, she says:—

"The unhappy ask lesser favours. Prince, my tears ask exile only. Far from the Greeks, even far from you, let me go to hide my son and weep for my husband. Your love will bring but hate upon us. Go back, go back to Helen's daughter.

Pyrrhus. And can I, madam? Ah, how you grieve me! How can I give her back a heart you have taken from me? I know that my vows were promised to her. I know that she has come to reign in Epirus. Fate has brought you both to this place—you to wear chains, she to impose them. But what have I done for her? Would not one say, seeing your beauty all-powerful and hers disdained, that here it is she who is captive and you who reign? Ah, one of those sighs which are breathed for you, did it turn to her, would fill her with joy.

Andromache. And why should your sighs be repulsed? Has *she* forgot your past services? The memory of Troy and Hector do not revolt her soul against you. She owes no love to the ashes of a husband. And such a husband! Oh cruel thought! His death alone made your father immortal. He owes to Hector's blood the fame of his arms, and you are both known only by my tears."

"Enough, enough, madam!" cries Pyrrhus, stung by these taunts; and he warns her that his heart, which loves with transport, can hate with fury. He now counsels her to go and visit her son, and to reflect well upon her answer, for upon her decision will the boy's life depend.

The second act brings us into the presence of Hermione, who consents with great reluctance to see Orestes. What a triumph for him, she cries, to see her who has slighted him in her turn despised! Is this, he will say, the proud Hermione? When he enters, she asks sadly if it is a lingering tenderness that has made him seek so sad a princess; but stops him imperiously when he begins to pour forth his unchangeable love, and demands to know how he has sped in his embassy. Orestes, abashed, replies that his embassy is over, and that Pyrrhus has determined to protect Astyanax. Hermione knows, therefore, that Pyrrhus means to marry Andromache. "The traitor!" she cries. And when Orestes again timidly begs to know his fate, she turns upon him with a sudden change of aspect, and asks if he believes there have never been moments in which she has wished for his presence.

"*Orestes.* Wished for me! Oh, divine princess, for pity do you remember to whom you are speaking. Open your eyes; think that Orestes is before you—Orestes so long the object of these angry glances.

Hermione. Yes; you whose love, lit by their light, first taught them their power. You whose virtues force me to esteem you. You whom I have pitied, whom I would fain love——

Ores. I understand you too well. This is my melancholy portion. The heart is for Pyrrhus, and the wish only for Orestes.

Herm. Ah, desire not the fate of Pyrrhus! I should hate you too much.

Ores. You would but love me the more. Ah, with what different looks you would regard me! You wish to love me, but I please you not. If love alone ruled your heart, you would love me, madam, even in wishing to hate me. O

heaven, so much on my side! a love so tender; so many reasons for me if you would but listen to them! And for Pyrrhus you alone, perhaps in spite of yourself, without doubt in spite of him: for he hates you; his soul, possessed by another, has no more——

Herm. Who has told you, prince, that he disdains me? Have you learned it by his looks or by his words? Judge if the sight of me inspires disdain—if the impression I make lasts so short a time. Perhaps other eyes are more favourable to me.

Ores. Go on! It is fine to insult me thus. Cruel! it is I, then, that disdains you. Your eyes have not tried my constancy enough. I am the witness of their want of power! It is I that have despised them! Ah, how it would please them to see my rival despise their power as I do!

Herm. What matters his hate or his tenderness to me? Go arm all Greece against the rebel. Go make of Epirus a second Ilion. Go! After that will you say that I love him?

Ores. Madam, do more. Come with me yourself. Let your eyes speak to all hearts.

Herm. But what if he marries Andromache? Think what shame for us if he should become the husband of a Phrygian!

Ores. And you hate him! Confess it, lady. Love is not a fire which can be hidden. Everything betrays it—the voice, eyes, silence itself."

Hermione, however, closes the scene by bidding him return to Pyrrhus and tell him that the enemy of the Greeks can never be her husband—that he must choose between Troy and her. "In short," she says, "let him send me away or give up the boy. Adieu! If he will consent, I am ready to go with you."

In the meantime Pyrrhus has changed his mind about Andromache. He meets Orestes and tells him that he

will abandon her, that he will give up the boy to him, and that he hopes to be married to Hermione upon the following day, and to receive her from his hands. Phœnix, Pyrrhus's counsellor, is present at this meeting, for the king cannot go anywhere without his remembrancer. And after Orestes has left them, Pyrrhus vaunts himself upon his strength of mind in giving up Andromache.

"*Phœnix.* Cease, then, prince, to talk of her to me. Go to Hermione, and, happy with her, forget at her feet even your anger.

Pyrrhus. Think you, if I marry Hermione, that Andromache will not be jealous in her heart?"

This touch of genteel comedy in the midst of a tragic drama has a strange effect, and was the subject of much comment. The divided mind of Pyrrhus—one moment determining to return to his early love, the next to go back to Andromache to satisfy himself with the sight of her humiliation—and the bewildered half-sympathy, half-sarcasm of Phœnix, read like a chapter in a modern novel.

They remind us of Voltaire's too constant remark upon Corneille: "This verse would do for comedy, but tragedy cannot allow it." Pyrrhus's question, "Think you, if I marry Hermione, that Andromache will not be jealous in her heart?" and the half-mocking, half-pitying rejoinders of Phœnix, natural and pleasing as they appear to us now, were much criticised when the play was first acted. The pit, we are told, broke out into open laughter. And during the last century, when men in France piqued themselves upon being theatrical critics, there were many who disapproved of the bantering tone

in which Phœnix replies to his master. Tragedy, they thought, should be very noble and sublime; no expression should be used that was not suitable to the tragic character. Any blending of the comic with the serious was, to them, such a fault as to show clearly that the author was not an artist, and that he did not know the principles of his business.

The third act begins with a consultation between Pylades and Orestes on Pyrrhus's change of purpose. The mission of Orestes is thus successful, while his hopes are crushed to the dust; and the only expedient that remains to him is to carry off Hermione. In the meantime it is his fate to tell her that Pyrrhus has been convinced, and that her marriage rites are being prepared. A little indignation mingles at first with Hermione's reception of the news. "He returns to me when I am about to forsake him," she says. "I will believe with you that it is Greece he fears: but what can I do? my faith has been promised to him. Can I take from him that which does not depend on me? It is not love that decides the fate of a princess." She reasons thus to conceal her joy, which bursts forth when she is left with her confidante alone. "Know you what Pyrrhus is?" she cries; "have his exploits been told you? Bold, victorious, delightful, faithful——" Here she is interrupted by the entrance of Andromache, who comes to beseech Hermione to save her son. Not in jealousy or envy does she come. She had loved Hector, and her love is buried with him in his tomb. But a son is left to her, and she implores Hermione to use her influence over Pyrrhus to save her boy. Hermione answers her scornfully.

"I understand your grief; but my father has spoken, and it is my stern duty to be silent. It is he who moves Pyrrhus to anger: but who can plead with Pyrrhus like yourself? Your eyes have long swayed him. Gain him to your side, and I will lend my voice."

As Hermione sweeps away, Pyrrhus and Phœnix enter, and the unhappy mother hears the counsellor say—

"Let us give up Hector's son to the Greeks.

Andromache (*throwing herself at his feet*). Ah, prince, pause! What will you do? If you give up the boy, give them his mother also. You who have sworn so much love for me, O heaven, can I not touch your pity? Am I condemned without hope?

Pyrrhus. Phœnix will tell you; my word is pledged.

Andr. You who would have braved for me so many perils!

Pyrr. I was blind once; my eyes are opened now. I might then have granted you grace, but you did not even ask it. 'Tis now too late.

Andr. Ah, prince! you heard the sighs which feared refusal. Forgive to fallen greatness this remnant of a pride that fears to show itself importunate. You know my wishes; and but for you Andromache would never have clasped the knees of a master. . . . See, then, the condition to which I am fallen. I have seen my father dead, and our walls thrown down; I have seen all my kindred perish. I have seen my husband dragged through the dust; his son reserved with me for chains. But what cannot a son do? I breathed, I hoped. I believed that our prison might become a refuge. Pardon, dear Hector, my credulity. I could not suspect thy enemy of a crime. In spite of himself I thought him magnanimous"

Pyrrhus feels his heart melting, and sends away Phœnix so that he may speak more freely; and he con-

jures Andromache to think well of what she is about to do. She may, if she will, still save her son; but this is the last opportunity that will be given to her. As he goes on, his appeal to her becomes impassioned. "For the last time save him, save yourself," he cries. "I know what oaths I must break for you, . . . but this offer is not to be disdained. You must reign or you must perish. I die if I lose you, but I die if I wait. Think of it." Thus Pyrrhus leaves her to make her choice.

The unhappy Andromache remains on the stage with Cephisa, her waiting-woman. Cephisa counsels her to accept Pyrrhus's offer; but she cannot resolve to marry her tyrant.

"Can I forget Hector unburied, dragged in dishonour round our walls?" she says. "Can I forget his father thrown down at my feet, covering the altar with blood? Think, think, Cephisa, of that cruel night. Imagine Pyrrhus with fierce eyes entering by the light of the burning palace, making his way over my dead brethren!

Cephisa. Enough. Let us then see your son die. All they want is that you—— You tremble, lady!

Andr. Ah, with what memories you overwhelm my soul! What, Cephisa! must I see the death of my son, of my only joy, the image of Hector? Alas, I remember well the day when his brave heart led him forth to seek Achilles or Death! He asked for his son and took him in his arms. 'Dear wife,' he said, drying my tears, 'I know not what fate is reserved for me: I leave thee my son as a pledge of my love; if he loves me, let him find me in thee. If the memory of our happy marriage is dear to thee, prove to the son how much the father was beloved.' And I can see blood shed which is so precious? I must let all his fathers perish in him? Oh, barbarous being, must my fault include him? If

I hate thee, is he guilty of my hatred? But alas, my son, thou diest if I do not arrest the cruel blow! I can avert it, and yet I offer thee to it. No, you shall not die. I cannot bear it!"

The fourth act opens with Andromache once more. She has made her choice. She will marry Pyrrhus, and thus engage him to protect her boy; and when she has left him at the altar, she will destroy herself. She takes Cephisa into her confidence, and instructs her how to teach her infant after she is gone. These lines are perhaps the sweetest that Racine has written. They contain the mother's last wishes for her child, and they have in them much charming simplicity and grace—

"*Andr.* Make my son know the heroes of his race. As much as you may, lead him in their steps. Tell him by what great deeds they have been distinguished, what they did rather than what they were. Speak to him daily of the virtues of his father, and sometimes also tell him of his mother. But let him not think, Cephisa, of avenging us. We leave him a master whom he must consider. Let him have of his ancestors a sober recollection. He is of the blood of Hector, he is all that remains of him; and for that remnant I myself in one day have sacrificed blood and life, my hatred and my love."

Our attention is now recalled to Hermione, who receives with a terrible calm of passion which her attendant cannot understand, the news of this renewed alteration in Pyrrhus. She will say nothing to Cleone, but sends for Orestes, whom she interrupts in his eager delight at the summons.

"*Herm.* Prince, I would know if you love me?
Ores. If I love you? O heaven! My oaths, my per-

juries, my flight, my return to you, my respect, my reproaches, my despair, my eyes drowned in tears—what witnesses will you believe if you believe not these?

Herm. Avenge me; I believe everything."

This "Vengez-moi; je crois tout," is very fine in its tiger-like fury. Hermione is indeed like a tiger when she is roused, and one can imagine how thrilling it must have been to see Rachel in this part.

Orestes replies eagerly, thinking she refers to their previous bargain.

"*Ores.* Be it so. Let us set once more Greece on flame. Let us take, you the place of Helen, I of Agamemnon, making famous my arm and your name. Awake once more in this land the miseries of Troy, and let us be famed like our fathers. Let us go. I am ready.

Herm. No, prince, remain. I would not carry such insults so far. What! to crown the insolence of my enemies, shall I await elsewhere a tardy revenge? shall I trust to the fate of battles which perhaps in the end may not avenge me? I will have all Epirus weep my departure. But if you avenge me, it must be in an hour. Your delays are to me as refusals. Hasten to the temple. There you must sacrifice——

Ores. Whom?

Herm. Pyrrhus.

Ores. Pyrrhus, lady!

Herm. Ah! your hate wavers. Fly, and fear not that I will call you back."

Orestes is glad to have an opportunity of avenging himself on Pyrrhus, but would rather take his vengeance openly. "Let us be his enemies, not his assassins," he says. He fears to sully his own name and the fair name of Greece by assassinating the King of Epirus. Hermione is very imperative that Pyrrhus

should die at once. She feels that though he has cruelly wronged her, her old passion for him may return unless he is quickly punished. Unless he dies to-day she may forgive him, and love him again to-morrow. Orestes consents at last with reluctance, and dread of the revolution that must follow, but still asks for delay. He will do it at night, not now. But Hermione is not to be put off.

"*Herm.* To-day he weds Andromache. Already in the temple the throne is raised, and my shame complete. Come back covered with the blood of the traitor. Go! and thus make sure of my heart.

Orcs. But, lady, think——

Herm. Oh, it is too much, prince! . . . Go vaunt your constancy to other ears than mine, and leave me to my revenge. I will go alone into the temple when the marriage rites are prepared, and where you dare not go to win me. There I shall find means to approach my enemy. I will pierce the heart which I could not touch. And my bloody hands turned on myself, will unite us in spite of him. Thankless as he is, it will be sweeter to die with him than live with you.

Ores. No; I will take this fatal pleasure from you, lady. He shall die only by the hand of Orestes. Your enemies shall be sacrificed by me, and you shall then reward my care if it so pleases you.

Herm. Go! leave to me the guidance of your fate, and let your ships be ready for our flight."

In the next scene Pyrrhus is suddenly brought upon the stage, face to face with Hermione. Pyrrhus explains without justifying his falsehood, and Hermione receiving him at first with dignity, ends with an outburst of passionate love and rage. At the first sight of him she has sent hurriedly to call back Orestes; but at the end

of the conversation she rushes from him with a wild cry, "Go profane the sacred majesty of the gods! carry to the foot of the altar the heart which forsakes me! Go, fly! but fear to find Hermione there before you!"

At the beginning of the fifth act we find Hermione upon the stage alone, and in a very beautiful soliloquy she communes with herself as to what she ought to do:—

"Where am I? what have I done? what must I do? What transport crazes me! what pains devour me! I wander through the palace, not knowing what I would or where I go. Oh that I could but tell whether I love or hate! Cruel! with what a look he left me! without pity, without even a show of regret. Mute to my sighs, tranquil amid my fears, what was my misery to him! And I lament him still! and to crown all, my heart, my base heart, clings to him! I tremble even to think of the blow that threatens him, and on the eve of avenging myself I am ready to pardon. No! the verdict of my wrath shall not be revoked: let him die, since he lives for me no more. The traitor triumphs and laughs at my rage; he thinks the storm will melt away in tears. He believes that, always feeble and of uncertain heart, I will defend him with one arm while I strike with the other. He judges me by the past. No, rather, the traitor has other thoughts. Triumphant in the temple, he heeds little what is thought elsewhere of his life or his death. He leaves this struggle to me. No, no; one moment more! let Orestes do his work. Let him die, since he must have foreseen it, since at last he has forced me to wish it—— To wish it? Ah me! it is, then, I that sentence him; his death will be wrought by the love of Hermione. This prince, whose exploits I never wearied of hearing, to whom in secret I had devoted myself even before our fatal betrothal—I have crossed the seas, endured so many changes, only to procure his death, to ruin, to slay him? Oh, before

he dies—— (*Enter Cleone.*) Ah, what have I done, Cleone? what news do you bring me? Pyrrhus——?

Cleone. Is at the height of his desires—the most proud of mortals and the most tender. I saw him lead like a conqueror his captive towards the temple, and his eyes shining with love and hope, intoxicate himself with the sight of her. Andromache, amid a thousand cries of joy, carried to the altar the thought of Troy. Incapable of love or hatred, without pleasure or complaint, she seemed to obey.

Herm. But he, the monster? did you mark him well, Cleone? Had he such tranquil and perfect pleasure? Did he not once look toward the palace? Tell me, did he not see you in the crowd? did not he blush at the sight of you; or was he proud and shameless to the end?"

Cleone can give her mistress no comfort. Pyrrhus has no care but Andromache; he sees no danger but for her son, whom he is now bound to protect.

"*Herm.* He shall die, the traitor! What said Orestes to thee?

Cleo. Orestes and the Greeks entered the temple.

Herm. What say you? was he not ready to avenge me?

Cleo. Lady, I know not.

Herm. You know not? What! Orestes! Is he, too, false? does he, too, betray me?

Cleo. Orestes adores you; his spirit struggling with remorse, listens now to his love, now to his judgment. He respects in Pyrrhus the honour of the crown. He respects in him Achilles as well as himself: he fears the Greeks, he fears the wrath of the universe, but most of all he fears himself. The name of assassin dismays him. He has gone into the temple without knowing if he will come out guilty or still innocent.

Herm. He will take good care not to disturb the feast. I know by what remorse his courage is assailed. The coward fears death, and that is all he fears. What! my mother, without uttering one single prayer, had all Greece in arms

ready to fight and die for her. And I, who ask only for the punishment of a traitor,—I charge my lover with the care of my honour, to win me at that price. I offer myself as reward, yet I am not avenged. Be it so. It is mine to avenge myself. . . . I shall die; but at least my death shall avenge me. I shall not die alone.

Enter ORESTES.

Ores. Lady, it is done! You are obeyed. Pyrrhus at the altar-steps has breathed forth his false life.

Herm. He is dead!"

Orestes then tells her the story. He went into the temple, and there saw Pyrrhus standing at the altar with Andromache by his side. Pyrrhus recognised him, but only to show greater boldness. The presence of the Greeks, whose ambassador he had defied, made his marriage more splendid. He took his diadem and placed it on the head of Andromache. I give you, he said, my faith and my crown. Andromache, reign over Epirus and me. I swear to your son a father's care. I call the gods to witness it, I swear it to his mother. His enemies shall be my enemies, and I acknowledge him as king of the Trojans. To these words the Greeks answered only with a cry of rage. They flung themselves upon Pyrrhus. Orestes saw him fall, and hurried forth to save the princess and convey her to the ships.

"*Herm.* What have they done?

Ores. Pardon their impatience. They have, I know, forestalled your revenge. You would that my hand had struck the first blow, that he should have known that he died for your cause. But it was my zeal that was their example; for you I led them to the temple. Yours is the honour of a deed which their arms have only executed. You alone inspired the blow——

Herm. Silence, traitor! This vile deed is thine alone. Go vaunt your fury among the Greeks! Go! I disown it and you. Savage! what have you done? with what fury have you cut the thread of a beautiful life! Speak! Who made thee the arbiter of his fate? Why have you killed him?—by what right? What has he done to thee?

Ores. Gods above! What! Have not you yourself—you, here, a moment since, ordained his death?[1]

Herm. Ah, who would believe an outraged lover? You should have read my spirit better. Saw you not through all my rage that my heart gave the lie to my lips. Even if I said it, should you have consented? You should have made me repeat it a hundred times. You should have returned to consult me before giving the blow. You should have left to myself the care of my revenge. . . . Adieu! you may depart. I remain in Epirus. I give up Greece, Sparta, my country, my family. It is enough for me, traitor, that they have produced a monster like you."

Orestes is left bewildered and overwhelmed by these invectives. He has made himself an assassin, a regicide, a sacrilegious murderer, to please her; and now she turns upon him. But he has little time to bewail himself, for Pylades and his retainers rush in to force him to flee.

Andromache is queen, the people are ready to obey her, and she has vowed revenge upon the foes of Pyrrhus. But Orestes, true to his love, will not forsake Hermione. He is then told that Hermione is dead, and needs his

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[1] M. Paul Mesnard here opportunely reminds us of a curious coincidence. In "King John," Shakespeare makes the king say—

"I had mighty cause
"To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him."

And Hubert answers—

"None had, my lord! Why, did you not provoke me?"—Act iv. sc. 2.

devotion no more. On her way to the temple she met the bier of Pyrrhus; and bidding the bearers halt, stooped over the body, then turned her head towards heaven, and stabbed herself.

The play ends with a wild outburst of passion and despair from Orestes. He is the sport of the gods, born to serve for an image of all the miseries they can devise. In his anguish the day seems to darken round him, and he sees a vision of his rival and his love:—

"*Orestes.* What! Pyrrhus! I meet thee once again! Pierced by so many blows, how hast thou escaped? Hold! here is my blow, which I have saved for thee. But what do I see? Hermione before my eyes clasps him in her arms. She snatches him from the threatened blow. Ye gods, what looks she casts upon me! What demons, what serpents she brings after her! Daughters of Hell, are your hands ready? Do you come to bear me away into eternal night? Come, Orestes abandons himself to your fury. But no, withdraw; let Hermione do all. She can make me more miserable than you can. I bring her my heart to devour.

Pylades. He has swooned. Friends, time presses; let us save him while he knows nothing. When he comes to himself, our efforts will be vain."

CHAPTER III.

LES PLAIDEURS—THE LITIGANTS.

RACINE tells us in his preface to "The Plaideurs" that he took his comedy from "The Wasps" of Aristophanes. He had intended his play for an Italian company of actors then in Paris, who were noted for the buffooneries with which they and other Italian companies before them had for many years past amused the Parisians. But they had left Paris, or at any rate their head-man Scaramouche had left, before Racine had written his play, and he was therefore compelled to give up his idea. He had spoken of his intentions to some of his friends; and they, notwithstanding that the Italians had left, were eager that he should write a little comedy, principally with the object of putting upon the French stage some specimen of the wit that had formerly been so delightful to the people of Athens. They were very pressing in their demands, and were sanguine of a happy result, each one giving a little advice; so that Racine, in spite of what he would call his better judgment, began his play, and he tells us it was not very long before it was finished.

It was not Racine's intention to write a high-class

comedy. Molière's fame was so well established, and his own susceptibilities were so keen, that he was unwilling—not to say afraid—to throw down a challenge to a rival on his own peculiar ground,—and a rival, moreover, with whom he had lately quarrelled. Nor is it probable that he had wished to write a burlesque, or an extravaganza. As we now read "The Plaideurs," we are at first left in doubt whether to call it a comedy or a farce. It has in it the nature of both. It is in fact a farce, though the style and tone of the versification are those of comedy. The ludicrous situations of the moment interest us rather than the general development of the plot. There are scenes that are grotesquely absurd, which are hardly connected with the story, which cannot be said to spring from the nature of the play, and whose only object is to provoke laughter. The whole piece from beginning to end was written with the desire to create a laugh; we do laugh and are amused, though here and there something of the endeavour to write a droll line or to introduce a *bon mot* remains visible. This may perhaps be accounted for rather from the fact that "The Plaideurs" was Racine's only comedy, and that he had not quite learned the art of making his comic scenes evolve themselves one from the other, than that he borrowed some of his best points from Aristophanes. The situations in some of Molière's lighter plays are as grotesque as in "The Plaideurs;" but Molière knew better how to bring them about, and how to join them together, and consequently they appear more natural—to belong to comedy instead of to farce.

Besides borrowing from Aristophanes and from Rabelais,—for the merry doctor of medicine and *curé* of

Meudon has furnished him with a good many pleasant traits,—Racine was assisted in the composition of his play by the "Roman Bourgeois" of Furetière; and Furetière probably gave him one or two hints on matters of law, and made him acquainted with half-a-dozen legal phrases. The "Roman Bourgeois" is a realistic picture, cleverly drawn, and not so very dull as are most of the novels of two hundred years ago,—satirising, and sometimes with much invective—the manners of the townsfolk of Paris in the middle of the seventeenth century. Furetière had been an advocate; and consequently the lawyers, and the people about the courts—*les gens du palais*—come in for a full share of his raillery. It was mainly about them that his book was written.

The scene of "The Plaideurs" is laid in Normandy, and the play opens with a long speech from John, whom his master, Perrin Dandin, the judge, has lately engaged as a porter. John comes from Picardy, in which country men are reputed to be not so clever as their Norman brethren. John, however, has his eyes open, and he has not been in Normandy very long before his companions find out that he knows quite as much as they do. His speech at the opening of the play is witty and humorous,—some of the lines have become proverbial. It is full of the Attic salt of Aristophanes, which Racine's quick and susceptible mind readily imbibed and moulded to his own uses.

John is uneasy about his master, who is never happy but when on the bench. Dandin's cap and gown are so dear to him that he wears them even in bed. He is always in court the first in the morning and the last at

night; and once he wrung the neck of his favourite cock for awaking him half an hour later in the morning than usual. John tells the audience that the judge had said that his cock had been bribed by an unfortunate suitor who thought he was going to be cast in his case:—

"Il disait qu'un plaideur dont l'affaire allait mal
Avait graissé la patte à ce pauvre animal."

Since then his son Leander and John together had kept an eye on the judge, and the poor porter is robbed of his natural rest. "But," says John, "come what may, I'll have a stretch now; I can't be hanged for sleeping in the street." Just as he has laid himself down, L'Intimé, Dandin's secretary, comes to disturb him.

"*L'Intimé.* What on earth, man, are you doing here at this time of the morning?—it is now three o'clock.

Jean. I can't be always on my legs, looking after my master. And what a tongue he has got! I told him once I was tired, and wanted to go to sleep. 'Present your petition,' he said to me, 'setting forth how you would sleep.' Now, my friend, I'll wish thee good-night."

This takes place outside Dandin's house, and presently a noise is heard inside. Dandin appears at the window, and calls out to his two followers. Each makes a sign to the other to be silent; and as neither of them answers, the judge thinks that he can slip away without their knowledge. He jumps out of the window, and is caught by the two men below. He calls out "Thief!" and his son rushes to his rescue. Dandin is bent upon going into court. He has got with him briefs and papers that will last for three months; he will order the tavern-keeper to supply him with meat and drink, and he can every now and then take a short nap while a case

is going on. Leander will not hear of this: he tells his father to go back home,—that he should sleep there, take his meals there, and give himself some repose. Then the old man becomes indignant. Has he nothing to do but to think of good living, of balls and gaming-houses? While his son apes the nobleman, he, Dandin, is following the profession of his ancestors. They have all been judges before him, and their portraits are all hanging on his walls.

"*Dandin.* Ay! and it's the right profession, too. Compare the presents of a judge with those of a marquis. Wait until the end of December, and see how many of the smartest of them will only be too glad to come and warm themselves at my fire, and eat the good things out of my kitchen. Oh, my son, was this the lesson your mother taught you? . . . Poor Babonette! And, when I think of it, she never missed a single sitting, she never left my side, and she seldom came home without bringing something with her for the good of the house. She would have taken the cloths from off the tavern table rather than have come empty-handed."

This is an allusion to Madame Tardieu, the wife of the "Lieutenant-Criminel," who was known all over Paris because of her avarice, her parsimony, and her ugliness. Leander makes another attempt to put his father into bed. He tells John to lock the door, to fasten the window-bolts, and to barricade everything, so that his father may be warm and comfortable. The judge is dragged off, but he is scandalised at the irregularity of the proceeding. "What!" he cries, "you are taking me off to bed without a Form. I'll be revenged on you yet, and I'll not sleep a wink."

When he has gone, Leander takes L'Intimé aside,

and tells him of his love for Chicaneau's daughter, Isabelle. Chicaneau, Leander says, is a difficult man to deal with. He keeps his daughter very close; he has spent all his fortune, and is now spending hers, on interminable lawsuits; and unless a man is a bailiff, an officer of the court, or an attorney, there is no possibility of being able to catch a sight of the pretty Isabelle. Could not some honest forger—perhaps an officer of the court—be found, who for a consideration would consent to make himself useful? L'Intimé thinks that such a man might be had. If his father had been alive he would have managed the affair at once.[1] His father was such a clever and well-known man, that if in any town twenty strokes of the cat were to be given away, he would have pocketed nineteen of them for himself.

"*L'Intimé.* But why should not I assist you myself? Am not I the son of the master? I can do what you want better than any officer of the court.

Leander. Can you serve old Chicaneau with a false writ?

L'Int. Hum! hum!

Lean. Can you give a letter to his daughter?

L'Int. Why not? I am familiar with both trades."

While L'Intimé is arranging his plans, Chicaneau and the Countess Pimbesche, who are both pleaders, meet

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[1] L'Intimé, in proclaiming his father's villany, says that "the lines upon his forehead declared all his exploits."

"Ses rides sur son front gravaient tous exploits."

The verse is taken word for word from the "Cid" of Corneille, who of course had used it as a eulogy; and Corneille was much annoyed at what he thought was impertinence on the part of a man so much younger than himself. In two other instances in this comedy has Racine parodied Corneille, but they may pass without notice.

each other at four o'clock in the morning outside the door of the court. They have both a case that they want to bring on, and each is anxious to get his case heard first. A common cause brings them together, and each wants to tell his story to the other. Chicaneau gets the upper hand, and begins:—

"*Chicaneau.* Fifteen or twenty years ago I caught a young ass colt trespassing in my meadows. I got the ass seized, and I brought the case before the judge of the district. Damages were laid at two trusses of hay. An arbiter was appointed, and at the end of a year the case was given against me, and I was driven out of court. I appealed. My friend Slyboots, the attorney, for a few gold pieces got a decree on my appeal; but our adversary, a low pettifogging fellow, stayed execution. Then there was another point. While the suit was going on, my adversary lets his cocks and hens run about in my fields; and on that it was decreed that it be reported into court how much grass a fowl can eat in one day. The two cases are put together, and I go to work afresh and in right earnest. I produce Sayings, Objections, Inquiries, Assignments. I obtain a decree, and convict my adversary of falsehood. I get Orders, Summonses, Writs of Error, and Injunctions, all without number,—and in the end judgment is given against me. I am cast with expenses to the amount of nearly six thousand francs! Is this right? Is this justice? But I have one chance left. The last appeal is open to me. . . . And you, madam, have you not also a cause pending?

Countess. Would to heaven I had! I had only four or five left—one against my husband, another against my father, and another against my children—when, for some unknown reason, they all conspired against me, and have prevented me from bringing another action as long as I live."

Racine has taken this trait almost literally from the Comtesse de Crissé, a woman then very well known in

the law courts in Paris. We find her spoken of as a litigant by profession, a woman who spent all her life in lawsuits, and who squandered all her money in this ruinous occupation. The Parliament at last prohibited her from bringing any action against anybody unless she showed a certificate signed by two of its own counsellors. At the first representation of "The Plaideurs," the actress who played the part of the Countess wore a faded pink dress, and a mask over her ears, such as were generally worn by Madame de Crissé.

The Countess Pimbesche is very unhappy. But she has got a grievance, and she means to make the most of it. She will sell the clothes off her back before she will forego what she conceives to be her lawful right. She is now sixty: she has been a suitor for the last thirty years; and she cannot give up her one amusement. Chicaneau is all sympathy with her. He would fain give her advice, but she persistently interrupts him. By slow degrees he manages to get in a few words; but the Countess becomes very angry, and thinks that he means to insult her. Chicaneau would explain, but she will listen to nothing. He makes an unguarded observation to himself: "When once a woman has got a wrong idea into her head!" This altogether exasperates the Countess, and Chicaneau is forced to listen to her scolding. She is so noisy that John comes out of the house and tries to appease them, but they become fiercer than ever. Chicaneau calls the Countess a termagant, and she calls him a blockhead and a thief. John finds that he can do no good, so he leaves them.

L'Intimé has by this time played his part as honest forger, and has got the writ made out against Chicaneau.

He meets Leander, and tells him that he must act the part of commissary while he (L'Intimé) is acting the officer. Things have turned out fortunately, he goes on to say; for, as luck would have it, the Countess Pimbesche met him in his officer's dress and charged him with a writ of slander against Chicaneau, setting forth that he had called her a fool, together with other such plaints as are always put in to make an action more complete.

"But," says L'Intimé, "in order to get the marriage-contract signed, you must come along with me. Change your fair wig for a black one, and nobody will recognise you. While you are learning how the land lies, you may be making love to the daughter under her father's very nose."

Leander retires, giving to L'Intimé a love-letter for Isabelle. L'Intimé knocks at her father's door; but as she comes out, she does not recognise him in his legal attire. At length he makes himself known, and persuades her to take the letter. While she is reading it Chicaneau comes in, and, like a watchful father, naturally imagines the paper in her hands to be a love-letter. Isabelle, as soon as she perceives her father, tears up the letter, saying to L'Intimé, who also has perceived Chicaneau—

"There, that's what I'll do with your writ."

The father is overjoyed that his daughter should be reading a legal writ, but observes to her that she was wrong to destroy such a precious document.

When Chicaneau and L'Intimé are left alone, the sham officer communicates his business. He appears for a lady who professes a great respect for Monsieur Chi-

caneau, and who is desirous that he should attend a summons and give her satisfaction.

"Satisfaction!" exclaims the other. "I have injured no one."

"She wishes, sir, that before witnesses you should proclaim her to be a wise woman and not a fool."

Chicaneau immediately remembers his quarrel. He takes the writ and reads—

". . . On the 6th day of January, for having falsely and maliciously said, and being thereto instigated by litigious motives, that it was necessary to confine as mad the noble and powerful lady, Yolande Cudane, Countess of Pimbesche, Orbesche, &c., be it now declared that he shall instantly repair to the house of the said lady, and there in an audible voice, before four witnesses and a notary, shall proclaim that he acknowledges her to be in her senses, and that she is a lady possessed of sound judgment.

"(Signed) LE BON."

Chicaneau refuses to believe that a writ is signed by any one bearing such a name. He suspects that L'Intimé is tricking him, and calls him a knave. The mock officer feels that he must support his dignity, and tells Chicaneau that he will have to pay for his impertinence.

"*Chicaneau.* Pay for what? I'll give you a box on the ear.

L'Intimé. You are too good a man for that, sir.

Chic. Am I, then? There; take it.

L'Int. A box on the ear! That will go nicely with the writ.

Chic. Very well [kicking him]; you may put that in also.

L'Int. Thank you, sir; that's as good as ready money, and I want some badly.

Chic. Scoundrel!

L'Int. Don't mind me, sir; I should rather like a beating now."

Chicaneau has got a stick in his hand, and he raises it, muttering between his teeth—

"*Chic.* Officer indeed! I'll officer him.

L'Int. Look sharp, then [preparing to write]; I have got a wife and four children to feed."

By this time Chicaneau recognises his fault. He has been too hasty, and offers to apologise to the officer, whom of all men, he declares, he respects the most. But L'Intimé will not accept his apology.

"Let me see," he says to himself; "a stick raised with intent to strike, a kick, and a box on the ear. Faith! I wouldn't part with them all for a thousand crowns."

Perceiving Leander dressed in a magistrate's robe, he continues—"Here comes the commissary, just as though I had sent for him." L'Intimé proceeds to relate the bad treatment he has received from Chicaneau, and he also complains that Chicaneau's daughter tore up a certain writ that was given to her. The mock magistrate opines that it is unfortunate that both the father and daughter should be so refractory with the officers of the law, and he requests that Isabelle should appear. As she comes in, L'Intimé whispers to her that Leander is before her. Then the pretended magistrate begins his examination. The young lady says that her name is Isabelle: she is eighteen years old, and she is unmarried. Chicaneau thinks that such questions ought not to be put to his daughter; but Leander gently assures her that he will ask her nothing unpleasant, and that she may be

quite at her ease in answering his few questions. Isabelle confesses that the officer had given her a certain piece of paper, and that she tore it up, but not before reading what had been written upon it. She declares that she did not tear it up in anger, nor even out of any contempt for the officers of the law.

"But," says the magistrate, "it is evident that you have a contempt for the gentlemen of the long robe."

"I own," she answers, "that a gown did once disgust me, but now the aversion is wearing off."

Chicaneau is charmed at such an answer from his daughter.

"*Chic.* There's a good girl. I'll get thee a husband, provided he don't ask for a marriage-portion.

Leander. You will conform to the laws of justice?

Isabelle. Yes, sir; I will do anything to please you.

Lean. Will you stand by what you have now said?

Isa. You may rest assured, sir, of my constancy.

Lean. That is well. You may now sign this document."

And then, addressing Chicaneau, he asks him if he will sign his daughter's deposition.

"Ay, ay, I'll sign. I'll subscribe to all she has said."

Leander then comes to Isabelle and whispers into her ear—

"*Lean.* All is well. He has signed a valid contract of marriage between us, and now we've got him on the hip.

Chic. What's that he's saying to her? Faith, I think he has been charmed with her wit."

Leander as magistrate then tells the officer to conduct

Isabelle home, and he commands Chicaneau in the king's name to follow him.

As Chicaneau is being led out, Dandin appears on the roof of his house. John had shut him up, but the judge had contrived to escape. Seeing the two men below in legal robes, he asks them who they are and what they want. "Make haste," he says, "and present your petitions." The Countess has also made her appearance, and she and Chicaneau begin to plead their respective causes. We can understand the drollery of the situation, depending but little upon scenic apparatus, of which there was not much then in existence, but on the grotesqueness of the characters and position, as must have been the case in the representations of Aristophanes. And we cannot but remember how unlike it is to the idea of Racine which we have formed from his tragedies. Dandin for a while listens to them, and then retires, leaving the audience to suppose that he is endeavouring to find a way down into court. John rushes after his master, and comes back triumphant, saying that he has locked him up in a room close to the cellar. John is mistaken; for no sooner has he done talking than old Dandin appears at the cellar-window, quite ready for any case that may be brought before him. Chicaneau, from outside, gets up on to the ledge of the window beside the judge, and immediately begins to plead. Dandin, however, will not listen to him: but for Chicaneau, Dandin would by this time have been in court, and the judge will not forgive him. Chicaneau tries to tempt him with a cask of muscat wine that he has ordered to be taken to his house. Old Dandin pricks up his ears, and allows Chicaneau to repeat his petition. In the meanwhile

John, Leander, and L'Intimé—the two latter are now in plain clothes—surround the judge and Chicaneau, and push the two men through the window into the cellar. The Countess, who is there, becomes afraid that, through the influence of the wine, her rival will gain his cause. While she is trying to persuade Leander of the iniquity of leaving Chicaneau alone with the judge, Dandin comes running out, determined upon going into court. He has hurt himself by falling into the cellar, and he requests that a surgeon may be sent to him in court. Leander tries once more to urge upon his father the advisability of not being so intent upon his work. If he cannot be happy except when he is administering justice, let him hold a court at home and judge the members of his own household. He can there reign supreme, and without fear of appeal.

We now come to the main point in the play. John rushes in in great consternation; for Leander's dog, Citron, has stolen a capon out of the kitchen. Leander does not trouble himself much about his dog's misdemeanour, but rather he is delighted that a case should have arisen which his father can hear at home in his own house. Dandin is quite ready, but he will not have the suit brought before him in an irregular manner. There must be counsel on both sides, and the cause must be properly conducted.

"*Lean.* As you will. We will provide counsel; your secretary and your porter will do capitally. You will make excellent advocates of them—they are both very ignorant.

L'Int. Not at all, sir—not at all. I can put the master to sleep as well as another."

John is not quite so confident, but is comforted on

being told that as this is his first case it will be got up for him.

"*Dandin.* Now then, gentlemen, there must be no jobbery. Let us close our eyes against bribes, and let us stop our ears against corruption. You, Maitre[1] John, are for the plaintiff, and you, Master L'Intimé, are for the defendant."

Dandin gives a last look round to see that all is right. The advocates are in their places: but the judge sees some one he does not know, and asks him his business; to which he answers, "I am the prompter, my lord." There is authority for believing that prompters were occasionally allowed in the courts of law in France in the middle of the seventeenth century. Racine, therefore, satirised what appeared to him to be an absurdity. John is told by the judge to begin, and after three or four interruptions he commences:—

"Gentlemen, when I look with exactness at the mutability and the inconstancy of the world; when I see among so many different nations not one fixed star, but so many that are wandering; when I look at the Cæsars, and when I consider their greatness; when I look at the sun, and when I behold the moon; when I see the territory of the Babibonians[2] taken from the Serpans[3] and given to the Nacedonians;[4] when I see the Lorrans[5] pass from depotism[6] to democrism,[7] and at length to monarchy; when I see Japan——"

L'Intimé here exclaims in a loud voice—"When will he have done seeing?" The judge is made very angry by the interruption. "Thou impertinent counsellor," he

[1] Maitre, the title given to advocates. [2] Babylonians.
[3] Persians. [4] Macedonians. [5] Romans. [6] Despotism.
[7] Democracy. All these names in the text are the absurd words that are put into John's mouth by the prompter.

cries, "why did you not let him finish his period? I was sweating blood and water to see how he would get back from Japan to his capon. Continue, Master John." But John has lost the thread of his discourse, and he cannot go on. The prompter comes to his aid, and whispers to him—

"One reads——"
John repeats, "One reads——"
"In the Metamorphosis."
"What's that?"
"The Metem——"
"The Metem——"
"Psycose——"
"Psycose——"
"The booby!" the prompter mutters to himself.
John overhears him, and says after him, "The booby!"
"The idiot!" exclaims the prompter.
"The idiot!" repeats John.

The exasperated prompter cannot stand it any longer—

"A plague upon the advocate!" he cries.

John understands him now, and cries in return—

"A plague upon yourself and your lenten face. Go to the devil, and begone with you!"

Dandin would here call the attention of the advocate to the point at issue before the court; but John is very sore at having been ridiculed.

"*Petit Jean.* What's the good of beating about the bush like that? He wants me to use words as long as from here to Pontoise [as long, we might say, as from London to Maidenhead.] I don't need any ceremony to say that a mastiff has run away with a capon. He has eaten the finest Maine[1]

[1] The province of Maine was famous for its poultry.

capon in the yard; and the first time I lay hands on the brute his trial won't last long, for I'll throttle him.

Dandin. Call the witnesses.

Leander. It is easy to say that, but witnesses are dear, and can't always be had when they're wanted.

P. J. We have got plenty, and above reproach.

Dand. Produce them.

P. J. I've got them in my pocket. Look here, sir,—here's the head and the legs of the bird.

L'Intimé. I object to the evidence.

Dand. Good! But why do you object?

L'Int. Oh, my lord, they come from Maine.

Dand. It is true they come from Maine by the dozen.[1]

L'Int. My lord——

Dand. Will you be long, Mr Advocate?

L'Int. I can answer for nothing as yet."

He begins with terrible rigmaroles, and is more than once stopped by the judge; then all at once he bursts into a headlong rattle.

"*L'Int.* Here are the facts of the case: A dog comes into the kitchen and seizes a fine fat capon. Now, he for whom I speak is hungry, he against whom I speak is plucked, and he for whom I speak runs off with him against whom I have spoken. A summons is made out, and my client is arrested; counsel on both sides are engaged, and a day is fixed for the trial. I stand up to speak, I do speak, I have spoken.

Dand. There's a fine advocate! He is very precise in saying that which does not concern us, and when he comes to the point he talks so fast that we can't follow him."

L'Intimé then resumes his pleading at length, to the great annoyance of the judge.

[1] Besides being noted for its poultry, the province of Maine had long been in bad repute amongst the lawyers. We have evidence of this from Rabelais.

"*Dand.* Man or devil, whoever thou art, have done, or may heaven confound thee!

L'Int. I conclude.

Dand. Thank heaven!

L'Int. Before the creation of the world—

Dand. Ah, get on to the Deluge.

L'Int. Before the creation of the world all the elements, earth, air, fire, and water, were mixed up together, and to use the words of the poet—

> 'Unus erat toto naturæ vultus in orbe,
> Quem Græci dixere chaos, rudis indigestaque moles.'"

Here Dandin falls fast asleep and tumbles off his chair, but is woke by Leander to give judgment.

"*Lean.* Father, you must give your sentence.

Dand. To the galleys!

Lean. A dog to the galleys!

Dand. Faith, I understand nothing about it. My head is bewildered with chaos and the creation of the world."

L'Intimé makes a last appeal for his client. He presents three or four young puppies to the judge, praying that they may not be made orphans at so early an age.

"*L'Int.* Yes, gentlemen, you see our sad position. We are orphans; give us back our father—our father who begot us—our father who——"

Dand. Pouf! I am already moved with compassion. See what it is to be able to move our affections. And yet it is very hard to know what to do. The crime is proved, and the prisoner confesses it; but if he is condemned, it is no less perplexing, for all the children will be sent to the workhouse."

To escape the difficulty, Dandin tries to rush out of court, saying that he will see no one for the rest of the day; but he is stopped by Chicaneau and his daughter,

who have come to obtain his decision upon a matter of importance.

The moment old Dandin sees Isabelle he is struck with her beauty. He calls her back, and asks who she is. Chicaneau answers that she is his daughter. Chicaneau would then make his application to the judge; but Dandin, who would sooner talk to Isabelle than to her father, stops him.

"*Dand.* Your daughter knows your business much better than you do. Speak out: how pretty she is! what bright eyes! But it is not enough, my child, to be pretty; you must be wise and virtuous also. It does me good to see such youthful bloom. Do you know that I was a gay young fellow in my time? There has been talk of me, I can tell you.

Isabelle. I can well believe it, sir.

Dand. Tell me who you wish should lose their cause.

Isa. I wish ill to no one.

Dand. For you I will do anything.

Isa. You are very kind, my lord.

Dand. Have you ever seen any one on the rack?

Isa. No, and I hope I never may.

Dand. Come, you shall have a sight of it."

Chicaneau, however, stops the judge to explain his business, but Leander interrupts him, and, addressing his father, says that he can state the case in two words. It is simply a marriage-contract to which his consent only is wanting; all the other parties are agreed. This is, of course, the marriage-contract between Leander and Isabelle already spoken of, and which Chicaneau promised to sign so readily.

"*Dand.* Let them marry directly. To-morrow if they will; to-day if it is necessary.

Lean. Isabelle, come, salute your father-in-law.
Chic. What!
Dand. Explain this mystery."

The fathers are both taken by surprise when they are made aware of the state of the case. The judge will not go back from his decision; but Chicaneau declares that as his signature was wrongfully obtained, his daughter shall have no marriage-portion. Leander has gained his bride, and, like a true lover, he cares nothing for her father's money. The judge is altogether delighted; he can now be assured of a happy home for his declining years. He does not mean yet awhile to give up hearing cases; but he expresses a wish that counsel would be somewhat shorter in their arguments. At Isabelle's request he releases poor Citron, and gives orders that the dog may once more have his liberty. And so all ends happily.

CHAPTER IV.

PHÈDRE.

THE scene of this play is laid at Trezene, a town in the Peloponnesus; and when the story opens, Theseus, the king of Athens, has long been absent from his home. Hippolytus, his son, is minded to go and seek his father; but Theramenes, his governor, tries to dissuade him, saying that he has in vain travelled through many countries in search of Theseus, who perhaps, after all, may have his own reasons for not returning. Theramenes also tells his ward that his distaste to Phædra, his step-mother, ought not now to be a reason for driving him away. The dislike that she bore to her step-son when she first saw him, which had caused his father to banish him for a while, is now on the wane; and he can, moreover, have nothing to fear from a woman who is hopelessly ill of a malady, the cause of which she persists in concealing. Hippolytus then confesses that he desires to go, not because he fears his step-mother, but because he—he, the proud Hippolytus, the son of the proud Amazon—is in love with Aricia, the sister of the Pallantides. The Pallantides were the fifty sons of Pallas, the son of Pandion, who was the brother of

Egeus, Theseus' father. And Theseus had slain all the Pallantides because they had attempted to rob him of his kingdom. It was with their sister, his own kinswoman, that Hippolytus had fallen in love. He feels his position to be an unhappy one, for his father has set his ban against Aricia ever marrying, lest she should have children who would one day avenge the deaths of their fifty uncles. Theramenes is a most complacent tutor, and he counsels Hippolytus to be constant in his love for Aricia. The youth repeats his determination to go in search of his father; but he consents to see his step-mother before he starts, for Phædra had expressed a wish to see him.

Phædra, when she is first brought on the stage, is mourning over her wretched condition. She is borne down by a terrible misfortune that has wellnigh driven her into a frenzy. She knows her trouble, and the cause of her affliction. Venus, to be revenged upon Apollo for discovering her amours with Mars, has inspired Phædra, one of Apollo's descendants, with an invincible love for her step-son Hippolytus. The unfortunate woman has struggled against her passion, striving with all her force to quench it; but the hand of fate is against her, and her only remaining wish is to die. She thus addresses the Sun, her ancestor:—

"Noble and glorious author of an unhappy race, thou whose daughter it was my mother's boast to be, thou perhaps dost blush to see me in my shame; I come, O Sun, for the last time, to look upon thee!"

It should be borne in mind that in this tragedy Racine thoroughly preserves the Greek idea of Fate, declaring that this or that horror has been occasioned

by some god or supernatural agency, so as to create forgiveness for crimes which are thus unavoidable. But at the same time, he weakens the sympathy which arises from personal valour or virtue. In Homer we do not altogether praise or altogether condemn, because the gods are behind the scene doing all the work. But we have learned to accept and believe in our Homer as a good child believes a beautiful fairy-tale. In reading a modern author, we cannot feel the same blind faith.

Œnone, Phædra's old nurse and confidante, is with her, and she is horrified at her mistress's desolate state. For three nights Phædra has not slept, and for three days she has taken no food. Œnone asks her if she has committed any crime that makes her so full of remorse.

"*Œnone.* By what remorse are you thus rent asunder? What crime has brought on you so strange a trouble? Your hands are not stained with innocent blood?

Phædra. Thanks be to heaven, my hands are clean; would that my heart was as innocent!

Œn. What dreadful scheme, then, has been in your heart?

Phæ. I have said enough. Spare me the rest."

Œnone, however, insists, adjuring her mistress by every argument, by her own long services and fidelity, to have confidence in her. At last Phædra begins to yield.

"*Œn.* Do you love?

Phæ. I have in me all its fire and fury.

Œn. For whom?

Phæ. You are about to hear the crown of horror. I love; but I tremble and shudder at his name.

Œn. Who is it?

Phæ. You know the son of the Amazon, the prince whom I have so long oppressed!

Œn. Hippolytus! Great gods! . . .
Phæ. It is thou that hast said his name!"

Then Phædra makes a full confession. When she became the wife of Theseus, her happiness, her peace, seemed secure; but Athens revealed to her the proud enemy of her peace, at sight of whom she felt herself redden and grow pale, while her soul was filled with trouble. She knew it was Venus, the enemy of her race, who thus pursued her; and to appease the goddess, she built a temple to her, which she took much pains to adorn. Every day she offered up a sacrifice, and every day she burned incense upon the altar. But while her lips were invoking the name of the goddess, her heart adored Hippolytus, who was constantly in her sight, until at last she made his father banish him from home. For a while she was relieved. But when her husband brought her to Trezene, she saw again the face that she so dreaded. All her torments came back upon her. It is no longer love concealed in her breast, but the fatal power of Venus herself. Phædra now hates herself; she has a horror of her crime. She has not been able to resist Œnone's tears, and has confessed all; but she implores Œnone to respect her approaching death, and not to overwhelm her with reproaches.

Panope, a woman in Phædra's suite, then comes in and announces the death of Theseus. The people in Athens are already in a tumult as to their next king. Some wish for Phædra's son, for Phædra has a son of her own; some for Hippolytus; and there are others who are in favour of the house of Pallas, and would put Aricia on the throne. Œnone now gives most horrible counsel

to Phædra. She tells her that since Theseus is dead, her passion for Hippolytus is no longer criminal; her love for him is as any other love, and she may see him and love him without hurt or harm.

"*Œn.* Perhaps, thinking that you hate him, he will head the rebels against you: undeceive him, and show him that you hate him no longer. Gain him over to your side. King of these happy coasts, Trezene is his inheritance: but he knows that the law gives to your son the proud ramparts of Minerva. You have a common enemy: unite yourself to him to resist Aricia."

The second act introduces to us Aricia and her confidante Ismene. She had heard much about Hippolytus —of his haughty nature, that had never yet been bent to woman's yoke, and she is astonished that he should ask to see her. Ismene assures her that, notwithstanding his coldness, Hippolytus loves her, and describes how he betrays himself in her presence,—how his eyes become downcast whenever he sees her. Aricia is in a dreamy rapture at hearing this. She hardly knows whether to believe it or not. She recalls her misfortunes,—how all her brothers were killed, and how Theseus had forbidden the Greeks to look upon her with feelings of affection. She considers it very strange that Hippolytus, of all men, should love her. She avows to Ismene that though she has not weakly allowed herself to be charmed by him, yet his beauty and his vaunted grace, presents with which nature has chosen to honour him, have touched her heart; she is proud of his love thus unwittingly acquired, and feels it a triumph to have conquered a man supposed invulnerable. In the second scene Hippolytus presents himself, and as-

sures her that he will revoke the harsh laws his father had made against her, and that she is free to dispose of her heart as she will. He then tells her that she is entitled to be queen of Athens: that dignity belongs to her of right. Egeus, his father's father, was but the supposed or adopted son of Pandion her ancestor, from whom she is now lawfully entitled to the throne. He will unite his cause with hers against Phædra, and he hopes to be the means of making her the queen of Attica. Aricia is distrustful of so much professed kindness. She sees no reason why Hippolytus should all at once espouse her cause so warmly. Hippolytus then declares his love, and her heart becomes softened. She sees dignity and happiness before her, instead of the thraldom to which she had been lately subjected. She accepts her lover's good offers for raising her to high position, and adds that, of all his gifts, that is not the one she prizes most.

After this scene with Aricia, Hippolytus is called to the presence of Phædra. She comes in accompanied by Œnone, with the ostensible object of engaging him to protect her son; and then tries to excuse herself for her harsh behaviour to him. She confesses that she has been hostile to him, that she has banished him from his home, and ordered that his name should never be mentioned in her presence. But she now comes to crave his pardon. Could he have been able to read her heart he would have pitied her, and would have seen that she, less than any woman, deserved his hatred. Hippolytus answers with dignified toleration, allowing that it is hard for a mother to pardon the existence of a previous heir, the son of a former wife; and he entreats

her to blame herself no longer, and to entertain better hopes. Perhaps even now her husband is safe under the protection of Neptune, and may yet be restored to her.

"*Phæ.* Sir, a man does not visit the shores of the dead a second time. Since Theseus has seen these sombre shores, it is in vain to hope that a god may send him back. The greedy Acheron does not let go its prey. What say I? He is not dead, for he lives in you. I think I now see my husband before me. I see him; I speak to him; my heart. . . . Ah [*aside*], I know not what I say: my mad passion betrays me.

Hippolytus. I see how strong is your love. Though Theseus is indeed dead, he is still present to your eyes.

Phæ. Yes, prince, I long, I pine for Theseus. I love him, not as he appeared in hell, light lover of a thousand different objects of passion, ready to rob of his spouse the god of the dead; but faithful—nay, wildly simple, young, splendid, drawing all hearts after him, but proud, as our gods are painted, and as you now appear. When he crossed the seas to Crete, he had your gait, your look, your manner; the same noble modesty shone upon his face. Where were you then, Hippolytus? Why were you absent when all the Greek heroes assembled? Why were you too young to sail with them? It had been yours to slay the Cretan monster [the Minotaur]; to you my sister [Ariadne] had given the fated clue: but no; for that I would have forestalled her,—love would have shown me the way; I know I would have guided you through the labyrinth. How many cares that noble head had cost me then! No thread should have satisfied your lover. Companion of the danger you were bound to dare, I should have pressed on before you; and Phædra, descending to the labyrinth with you, would there with you have been found or lost!

Hip. Great gods! what do I hear? Do you forget, madam, that Theseus is my father, and your husband?

Phæ. By what right, prince, do you judge me, or think I have forgotten it? Cannot I guard my own honour?

Hip. Pardon me, madam. I blush to avow it, I understood amiss an innocent speech. I am ashamed to meet your eye. I go. . . ."

But Phædra has now gone too far to draw back. She cries, "Ah, prince, you have understood too well!" and with wild passion unfolds all her guilty soul.

"*Phæ.* Know, then, Phædra in all her passion. I love. Think not because I love thee that, innocent in my own eyes I approve myself, or that in fond weakness I have nourished the poison that distorts my reason. No; unfortunate object of celestial vengeance, I abhor myself more than you can abhor me. The gods are witnesses—those gods that have lighted this fatal fire in my veins—the gods who take a cruel pleasure in seducing a miserable mortal heart. And thou, recall to thy recollection the past. It were little to have fled thee, I drove thee away. I have sought to appear odious to thee, and inhuman. To resist thee the better I have sought thy hate. But what have these useless efforts done for me? Thou but hatest me the more, and I love thee none the less. . . . What say I? This confusion, this shameful avowal, think you I meant to make it? Trembling for the child I dared not betray, I came to ask thy pity for him. Vain project of a heart too full of the image it loves! Alas! I have spoken to thee only of myself. And now avenge thyself on this odious love. Punish me! Worthy son of a hero, deliver the world from a monster! The widow of Theseus loves Hippolytus! O frightful monster, let her not escape! Here is my heart, where thy blow should fall. Strike! Or if I am unworthy even a blow from thee, if my blood is too vile to stain thy hand, instead of thy arm lend me thy sword. Thy sword! Quick!"

Here Œnone interposes to control her mistress, and drags her from the stage.

Theramenes here enters, and finds Hippolytus greatly agitated, his colour gone from his cheek, and his sword from his side. The first impulse of the young man is to disclose all to his counsellor; but he stops short in generous shame. Theramenes brings the news that Athens has decided in favour of Phædra. Her son is king, and all is in her hands. "Ye gods, who know her, is this the reward of her virtue?" cries Hippolytus, in consternation. The scene ends with a hint that it is possible Theseus may still live.

At the beginning of the third act Phædra appears, turning in disgust from the honours that are offered to her. "Hide me rather," she cries. "I have said that which should never have been uttered." Her mind returns to the terrible interview in which she betrayed herself, and finds no comfort. Œnone, always at hand with a suggestion, asks whether it would not be better to seek forgetfulness in nobler cares, to reign, and thus flee from her private unhappiness.

"*Phæ.* I reign? I govern a State, when my feeble reason cannot govern me?—when I have lost all power over myself?—when I scarce breathe under a shameful yoke?—when I am dying?

Œn. Then flee.

Phæ. I cannot leave him.

Œn. You dared to banish him once, yet you cannot avoid him now?

Phæ. It is too late; he knows my madness; the boundaries of modesty are passed. I have displayed my shame before my conqueror, and in spite of myself hope has stolen into my heart."

Then there follows a consultation between them. Œnone argues that he is proud and cruel, that he is the son of a barbarian woman, that he hates the entire sex. But Phædra insists that it is not hopeless to move him. "Though his mother was a barbarian, a Scythian, still she loved." And at length she bids Œnone go to him to offer him the crown of Athens. "Weep, moan, insist," she cries. "Thy words will have better access to him than mine." When she is left alone, she makes an impassioned appeal to Venus — Venus implacable, the source of all her woes. Let the goddess turn her arms against a stronger enemy. Let her bring Hippolytus to his knees before her altar. Let him love—— But she is interrupted in the middle of her prayers by the precipitate re-entrance of Œnone.

"*Œn.* Banish the thought of a vain love. Madam, recall your lost strength. The king, who was thought dead, returns to your eyes. Theseus has come back. Theseus is here. . . .

Phæ. Just heaven! what do I hear? My husband comes, and his son with him. The witness of my terrible love will watch the welcome I give to his father—my heart still big with sighs he would not hear; my eyes wet with tears he heeded not. Think you that he, jealous of the honour of Theseus, will hide my shame from him? And even were he silent, it would be in vain: I know my treason, Œnone. I am not one of these bold women who wear an unblushing front, and are tranquil in the midst of crime. I know of what I am guilty. I remember all. These walls, these vaulted roofs, seem ready to utter speech, and await my husband to accuse me. Let me die! Let death deliver me from so many horrors. Is it such a great misfortune to cease to live? Death has no terrors for the unhappy. I fear only the bad name I shall leave behind

me. My poor children, what an inheritance do I bequeath to them! The blood of Jupiter may swell their courage; but even with the just pride of that great descent, heavy is the burden of a mother's crime.

Œn. Never was fear more just than yours; but why, then, expose them to such ignominy? Why accuse yourself? It will be said that Phædra, conscious of her own guilt, could not face her husband. Hippolytus is happy to find a witness for all his accusations in yourself. . . . Yield not so easily the victory to him. Accuse him first of the charge he may bring against you. Who will contradict you? Everything is against him; his sword that happily he left in your hands, your present trouble, your past grief, your warnings to his father against him, his exile obtained by your efforts."

This idea is too horrible to Phædra. She cannot accuse Hippolytus; but Œnone takes everything upon herself. Silence alone is what she asks from her mistress. "I will speak," she says, "and Theseus, embittered by my interference, will do no more than banish his son." For a father, even in punishing, always remains a father, and a light sentence will satisfy his anger: though even if innocent blood should be shed, Phædra's honour demands the sacrifice.

This specious address is interrupted by the entrance of Theseus, who comes forward eagerly to embrace his wife, but meets an unexpected repulse.

"*Phæ.* Stay, Theseus! profane not such holy transports. I no longer deserve your fond greetings. You are offended; jealous fortune has not in your absence spared your wife: I am unworthy to be loved or to approach you; henceforward I must think of hiding my shame."

When Phædra withdraws thus, Theseus, bewildered, turns to his son for an explanation. Hippolytus an-

swers him that Phædra alone can explain herself; and he asks his father that he may never see her more, that he may not again live under the same roof with her.

"*Theseus.* You, my son, you leave me?

Hippolytus. It was not I who brought her here, but you who led her to these shores. You deigned, my lord, to confide the queen and Aricia to this land of Trezene; I was charged to protect them. But what have I now to detain me?"

Hippolytus begs that he may be allowed to go and see other countries, and not pass his life, as hitherto, in idleness. Theseus is overwhelmed with surprise and grief. Why, he asks, has heaven drawn him from his prison if he comes back to find himself feared and undesired? He had expected a warm greeting; but he has been received with trembling: all flee, all turn from his embraces.

"*Thes.* Speak! what is this? Phædra complains that I am outraged. Who has betrayed me? Why am I unavenged? Has Greece, for whom I have so often fought, given an asylum to the villains? You do not answer me. Is my son, my own son, in league with my enemies against me? This doubt which overwhelms me cannot be borne. Go in: the crime and the culprit must be discovered, and Phædra must explain the trouble in which I find her."

In the beginning of the fourth act we find Theseus frantic with horror on hearing the story of Œnone. He is still asking a hundred painful questions, when he sees his son approaching, and the father's anguish bursts forth.

"*Thes.* He comes! Great gods! what eye would not be deceived like mine by that noble bearing? Can the holy signs of virtue shine on the forehead of a profane

adulterer? There should be certain signs by which to know traitors."[1]

Hippolytus sees sorrow written upon his father's face, and asks the cause of it. The rage and grief of Theseus then pour forth. "Traitor!" he cries, "do you dare to show yourself before me?" He bids Hippolytus fly and hide himself from his wrath. Enough that he has the shame of having given life to such a criminal: let not his death also stain his father's name. He calls upon Neptune,—upon Neptune, who had promised, for some favour done, to grant him his first prayer,—to hear him now; and he implores the god to avenge him and punish his son with most cruel chastisement. Hippolytus is dumb with wonder when he hears the charge that has been brought against him. But he is too noble and generous to break the heart of his father by a counter-accusation. It is respect, he tells Theseus, that closes his mouth; yet he defends himself as well as he can without betraying this terrible secret.

"*Hip.* Examine my life: recollect who I am. Great offences always follow smaller faults. He who has once burst the bounds of law may one day violate the most holy ordinances. But vice, like virtue, has degrees: never has timid innocence been seen to pass at once into wild licence. One day cannot make of a good man a traitorous murderer nor an incestuous villain. I have not been false to my birth, nor to

[1] M. Paul Mesnard has pointed out that we find the same thought in the "Hippolytus" of Euripides, v. 923-929; and also in the tragedy of "Seneca," Act iii. sc. 3, v. 918, 919. We all know the lines in "Hamlet," Act i. sc. 5:—

> "O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!
> My tables,—meet it is I set it down,
> That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;
> At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark."

the chaste heroine at whose breast I was reared. Above all, my lord, I have always displayed a hatred of such vices. It is by this that Hippolytus is known in Greece. I have pushed virtue to austerity. Day is not more pure than the depth of my heart; yet 'tis said that Hippolytus, seized by a base passion——

Thes. Thy very pride, coward, condemns thee! I see the meaning of thy hateful coldness. Phædra alone pleased thy immodest eyes. Thy heart disdained an innocent love.

Hip. No, my father. I have concealed it too long. This heart has not disdained a chaste love. I confess at your feet my real offence. I love; and I love, it is true, where you have forbidden me to cast my eyes. It is Aricia to whom my heart is subject. The daughter of Pallas has won your son. It is she whom I adore; and my heart, rebellious to your commands, can only sigh and long for her.

Thes. You love her? Heavens! But no. This artifice is too plain. You feign a crime to justify yourself."

The argument between the father and son grows more and more violent. Theseus will not believe this sudden defence; and though his heart yearns towards his son, the provocation is too great, and he drives him at last, wild with fury, from his presence. Phædra then appears, alarmed and remorseful, to pray for mercy. "Spare your race, respect your blood," she cries. Theseus reassures her on this point. He tells her that his son is yet alive, but that he has prayed Neptune to punish him. He bids her sustain him in his resolve to punish his son, not try to excuse him; then informs her of Hippolytus's plea that he loves Aricia. This has more effect on Phædra than any other of the terrible circumstances involved. When she is left alone she bursts forth into irrepressible anguish. Another has taught him to love, another has tamed his boldness. Phædra

alone he cannot endure, and it is she who has now to defend him!

While Phædra thus raves, Œnone comes in, thinking to save her mistress from some fatal catastrophe. She is met no longer by the confessions of Phædra's remorse, but by the transports of her jealousy, in which she forgets everything else. She draws in her own imagination a picture of the meetings of the two lovers; she figures to herself their happiness even when torn asunder, for they will then swear a thousand oaths of faithfulness.

"*Phæ.* No, I cannot suffer a happiness which insults me. Œnone, take pity on me: Aricia must die. My husband's wrath must be roused against her. Her crimes are worse than those of her brothers. What say I?—my reason wanders. I jealous! and it is Theseus whom I ask to avenge me! My husband lives, and I yet love—but whom? What heart is that which I desire? At each word my very hair stands erect with horror. I breathe at once imposture and incest, and my murderous hands long to plunge themselves in innocent blood. Wretch that I am! yet I live, and affront the sight of that holy Sun from whom I am descended. My ancestor is father and lord of all the gods. Heaven and all the universe is filled with my kindred. Where can I hide myself? If I go down into eternal darkness, my father Minos[1] there holds the fatal urn, and has the fate of men in his austere hands. Ah, how that shadow will shudder when he sees his daughter brought before him, obliged to acknowledge sins unheard of perhaps even in hell! What will you say, my father, to that horrible vision? I think I see the awful urn fall from your hands. I think I see you in your despair seek out some new punishment, yourself the executioner of your child. It is the vengeance

[1] Minos, as we all know, was one of the judges in the infernal regions.

of a cruel god that has ruined your race. In your daughter's madness behold his wrath. Alas! I have now gathered the fruits of the awful crime which disgraces me. Pursued by misfortune to my last sigh, I yield up in torment a life unsolaced by enjoyment."

Œnone, now as ever, is Phædra's evil spirit. She advises her mistress not to take her sorrow so much to heart. She loves: she has been led astray by a fatal charm, but is she the only victim over whom love has triumphed? Even the gods have done the same. Upon this, Phædra's anger is turned against Œnone, whom she declares to be the cause of all her misfortunes. It was she who counselled her mistress not to avoid Hippolytus when Phædra would have flown from him. It was her impious tongue which accused him falsely, and has blackened his whole life.

"*Phæ.* Get thee gone, hideous monster! go! leave me to my wretched fate. May just heaven pay thee fitly! May thy punishment affright those who corrupt, like thee, the minds of princes, urging them to the sin their hearts desire, smoothing to them the way of crime! Detestable flatterers! the most fatal gift that the wrath of heaven sends to kings!

Œn. (*alone*). Gods! I have done all, left all, to serve her. I have my reward, and I have deserved it well!"

At the commencement of the fifth act we find Hippolytus and Aricia together. She implores him, in justice to himself, to tell Theseus of Phædra's crime; but Hippolytus shrinks with generous horror from overwhelming his father's mind with the shame of this disclosure: he is sure that Phædra will one day meet with the ignominy she deserves. He then asks Aricia to fly with him away from Trezene, and leave a hateful spot,

where even virtue has become poisoned in the envenomed atmosphere. Aricia loves Hippolytus, but she shrinks from following him while there is no lawful bond between them: and Hippolytus, with extraordinary delicacy (impossible, we fear, to a Greek), understands her scruples; but he has already provided against them.

"*Hip.* Hymen is not always surrounded by torches. Outside the gates of Trezene, among the tombs of my fathers, there is a temple so sacred that no perjurer dare approach it. There none dare swear falsely, for falsehood is instant death. There let us go, Aricia, and confirm an everlasting love by a solemn oath. We will call upon the god of that temple to witness our vows, and we will pray him to be a father to us both."

As Aricia consents, Theseus is seen approaching. She hurries Hippolytus away, that they may not meet, and encounters the king alone. He asks what his son did there, and she answers that Hippolytus was bidding her an eternal farewell. "He swore eternal love—do not believe him," says Theseus; upon which Aricia bursts forth in defence of her lover.

"*Aricia.* Can you suffer a beautiful life to be so slandered? Are you so little acquainted with his heart? Do you so ill discern between innocence and crime? Are your eyes alone so blinded, that this hateful cloud hides from you that virtue which shines on all beside? Ah! 'tis too much to give him up to perfidious tongues. . . . Fear, prince, fear lest awful heaven so hate you as to grant your prayer. Often in wrath it accepts our victims; its gifts are often the punishment for our crimes. . . .

Thes. In vain would you cover guilt. Your love blinds you, ungrateful though he is. But I have witnesses sure and beyond doubt. I have seen—I have seen true tears——

Aric. Beware, prince! Your mighty hands have delivered

men from many monsters. But all are not destroyed, and you leave life to one who—— Your son, my lord, forbids me to continue. Did I dare to say out my meaning, I should make him too wretched. I leave you lest I should be forced to say more.

Thes. (*alone*). What is in her mind? What is hidden in this speech, so oft begun, so oft interrupted? Would they blind me with a vain pretence? Are they in accord to rend my heart? Alas! spite of all my severity, a plaintive voice awakes in my heart, a secret pity troubles and astonishes me. Once more let me question Œnone. I will know everything. Guards, let Œnone come here to me, alone."

In answer to the king's call, Panope, one of the women in Phædra's suite, now arrives with the news that Œnone has drowned herself, and that Phædra is in a state of wild despair. Now she caresses her children, now throws them from her. Three times she has begun to write, and thrice destroyed her letter. Theseus sees now the indications of some terrible mystery, and orders his son to be recalled. He will now hear him make his own defence; and he prays Neptune to stay his hand and not punish the boy. But it is too late. Neptune has already granted the prayer which should never have been offered; in the next scene, Theramenes, the tutor, enters with terrible news. Hippolytus is no more. He then proceeds to give a circumstantial account of his unhappy death. This narrative, containing in all ninety-three lines, has been much censured as being inopportune, and also because of its great length. Condemnation of the speech would be unfair; for though we may admit that a long piece of descriptive poetry would here seem to be out of place,

yet the picture drawn is so graphic, and is so vivid in the sense of horror conveyed, that we cannot refuse to allow to the poet the use he has made of his rare power of versification and of language. Hippolytus was driving his favourite horses outside the gates of Trezene, when they were suddenly frightened by a noise and by the appearance of a huge dragon that rose up out of the sea. So fearful were the bellowings of this hideous monster, that the earth shook, and the atmosphere became infected. The wave that washed him in recoiled instantly from terror. Hippolytus darted a javelin at the dragon and wounded him. The beast fell at the horses' feet, and writhing in his agony, opened his great fiery mouth and covered them with flames, and smoke, and blood. The horses rushed off in fright and became unmanageable. They no longer heeded the voice of their fond master, but darted wildly over rocks and stones. The axle-tree of the chariot was broken. Hippolytus fell entangled in the reins, and was dragged along, his body hanging out of his chariot, until the panic-stricken animals had stopped their wild career. Theramenes, who had seen the catastrophe, rushes after him and receives his last words.

"*Theramenes.* He opened his dying eyes: 'Heaven,' he said, 'has robbed me of an innocent life. When I am gone, look thou to sad Aricia. Dear friend, if my father be ever undeceived, if he weep over the fate of his son so falsely accused, tell him for my sake to treat his captive kindly, and to restore her to——' At these words the hero dying, left in my arms only a mangled corse."

While Theseus listens to this narrative in all the distraction of grief, Phædra enters, and in his despair he

turns upon her violently—"You triumph!" he cries, "and my son is dead;" but Phædra is in no condition for triumph. She has made up her mind to confess all.

"*Phæ.* My moments are few: listen to me, Theseus. It was I who looked with profane eyes upon your chaste and virtuous son. Heaven put a fatal passion into my bosom; the hateful Œnone carried out its plans. Fearing lest Hippolytus should betray to you a love which filled him with horror, she, the traitress, abusing my weakness, hastened to accuse him first. She is punished: flying from my anger, she has found under the waves a fate more merciful than she deserves. Already my life should have been cut short by the sword; but that would have left a doubt on slandered virtue. That you might know my remorse, I have chosen to die a slower way. I have taken, I have infused into my burning veins, a poison which Medea brought from Athens. The venom has now touched my heart, and thrown there an unknown chill. Already I see, as through a cloud, heaven and the husband whom my presence insults. And death, in withdrawing the light from my eyes, gives back to the day which they defiled all its purity."

"Et la mort, à mes yeux dérobant la clarté,
Rend au jour qu'ils souilloient toute sa pureté."

CHAPTER V.

ATHALIE.

In his preface to "Athalie" Racine has given us the groundwork upon which he laid his tragedy; it may not be amiss for us to recall the portion of Old Testament history from which his play is taken. Most of us will remember the name of Athaliah. She was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, the king and queen of Israel. She married Joram, the king of Judah; and at the beginning of the tragedy is represented as usurping the throne on the death of her son Ahaziah, who had been killed by Jehu. Joram, and all his sons except Ahaziah, had been slain by the Philistines; and Jehu had exterminated all the posterity of Ahab. When Athaliah heard of the massacre of Ahab's children, she undertook to destroy the whole race of David; and she put to death her own grandchildren — the children of her son Ahaziah. But Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah, and the daughter of Joram—but by a different mother—found means to steal away her nephew Joash, one of the sons of Ahaziah and grandsons of Athaliah, then an infant in arms, and intrusted him and his nurse to her husband, Jehoida, the high priest,

who hid the boy and his nurse in one of the rooms appertaining to the temple until the day when he was proclaimed king of Judah. The Bible does not tell us when Joash was proclaimed; and as some commentators have considered that it was on a feast-day, Racine thought that the feast of Pentecost was the time most fitting for the representation of the events in his play.

There is something very grand in the opening of this tragedy. We become at once impressed with the dignity and with the religious spirit of Old Testament history. As we read the first few lines aloud to ourselves, we perceive that there is in them a majestic roll of sound, —finer, perhaps, and fuller in its tone, than anything we find elsewhere in Racine's plays. The scene is laid in the vestibule forming part of the apartment of the high priest in the temple at Jerusalem; and Abner, one of the chief officers of the kings of Judah, has come there with Jehoida, the high priest, to celebrate the feast of Pentecost according to the old and solemn custom. Abner laments that the times have become changed, that ancient observances have now fallen into disuse, and that there are only a few who still keep up the pious custom. The people now worship Baal, and they blaspheme the name that had once been so sacred to their fathers. Abner fears, too, that Athaliah has got some secret design against Jehoida. He believes that the queen hates the high priest because of his strong attachment to God; and that she also hates his wife, Jehosheba, her own step-daughter, the sister of Ahaziah, the late king. And worse still, Mattan the high priest of Baal—whom Racine has made an apostate priest—is her constant adviser. Jehoida cares neither

for Mattan nor for the queen. He has no other fear but that of God. He is determined that Athaliah shall not triumph over him, and he exhorts Abner to remain steadfast in his faith.

Abner retires, and the high priest's wife appears in his place. Jehoida tells her that she cannot keep the rescued child concealed any longer. The worshippers of Baal have already too long taken advantage of God's mercy and scoffed at his threats. Joash must now be proclaimed king of Judah, and the idolatrous worship must be stopped. Jehosheba believes her husband's counsel to be always wise, and she prepares to do his bidding. But she fears lest Athaliah, when she learns that Joash, her grandson, is king, should collect her soldiers, attack the holy temple, and break in the doors; and she also dreads lest the terrible judgments of God upon the former kings of Israel should extend to her little nephew. Jehoida comforts her by telling her that God has commanded us to trust in him, that he will not in his anger punish the son who fears him because of the father who is guilty. His faithful children are to come to-day to renew their holy promises to him, and Joash by his noble modesty will touch the hearts of all good Israelites; his high bearing will show itself, and through him God will speak to his faithful people.

In "Athalie" Racine has introduced the chorus, as he had done previously in "Esther." He says in his preface that he has endeavoured to imitate the continuity of action as shown in the ancient drama, so that the stage should never be left empty—the intervals between the acts being shown by the songs of the chorus, and these songs having reference to what has previously hap-

pened upon the stage. The chorus is composed of young virgins of the tribe of Levi. Salomith is their leader. She is an imaginary character, and is supposed to be the sister of Zechariah, and the daughter of Jehoida and Jehosheba. She introduces the chorus to her mother; she sings with it; and she performs the functions of the Coryphæus in the ancient drama.

THE CHORUS.[1]

The God whose goodness filleth every clime,
Let all his creatures worship and adore;
Whose throne was reared before the birth of time,
To him be glory now and evermore.

ONE VOICE.

The sons of violence in vain,
Would check his people's grateful strain,
And blot his sacred name;
Yet day to day his power declares,
His bounty every creature shares,
His greatness all proclaim.

ANOTHER VOICE.

Dispensing light and life at his behest,
Burst forth the sun by him in splendour drest;
But of almighty love a brighter sign,
Shone forth thy law, pure, perfect, and divine.

THE CHORUS.

Justice with mercy to combine,
Is thine, O law, illustrious and divine!
Wisdom's bright crown, calm reason's rule supreme,
Of Israel's faith and love the blest eternal theme.

[1] This chorus concludes the first act. The translation is by Mr Charles Randolph, and was first printed in 1829. In this and the other choruses, a portion only is given, but enough perhaps to satisfy the reader.

In the beginning of the second act Jehosheba tells the maidens to stop their singing, and she will go with them into the temple to join the public thanksgiving. As they are going, Zechariah, the son of the high priest and brother to Salomith, rushes on the stage telling his mother that as his father was at the altar offering the sacrifice, Athaliah had with a haughty step walked into the court that men only are allowed to enter, and was even about to go into the sacred place reserved to the priests.

"*Zechariah.* The people, alarmed, fled on all sides. My father,—ah, what holy wrath lightened in his eyes! Moses before Pharaoh had seemed less terrible,—my father turned upon her. 'Queen,' he said, 'to this sacred ground, from which your sex and your iniquities alike banish you, do you come to brave the sacred majesty of God?' The queen, throwing a fierce glance upon him, opened her lips—to blaspheme, without doubt. I know not if the angel of God revealed himself before her with his glittering sword, but her tongue seemed frozen in her mouth, and her bold front was tamed in a moment. Her eyes in terror gazed around her. Above all, Eliakim struck her with wonder.

Jehosheba. What! she has then seen Eliakim?

Zech. We gazed together at that cruel queen, with an equal horror; but the priests wrapped us in their robes, and hurried us away. I know not what followed.

Jehosh. Ah, she will tear him, doubtless, from our arms! It was he whom she came to seek at God's altar. Perhaps at this moment the object of so many tears—God remember David!——

Salomith. Who is he—this object of so many tears?

Zech. Is Eliakim then in danger?

Sal. Why should he have drawn down the queen's anger?

Zech. Who would fear a fatherless child?

Jehosh. Ah, she comes! I will not meet her."

Athaliah, entering in great irritation after her interview with the priest in the temple, sends at once for Mattan, her priest and adviser. Abner, however, comes in first to calm her if possible. He tells the queen that she ought not to have been surprised at the warmth with which Jehoida spoke to her. She, the wife and the mother of a king of Judah, cannot be ignorant of the customs of the people. She must know that the God whom they serve has forbidden them all intercourse with any other god. Seeing the apostate priest advancing, he attempts to withdraw, but is detained by the queen. Racine has been censured for making Abner speak with disrespectful vehemence. But Athaliah was only usurping the throne. Had she in truth been a lawful queen, Abner, it may be presumed, would have addressed her differently. He considered that he did not owe any allegiance to her, and but little respect; and was also determined that she should know his thoughts. Mattan, when he comes in, exclaims with astonishment at seeing the queen in the midst of her enemies in the temple of the Lord; but she cuts short his remarks by commanding him to listen to her. She then makes a long address, and begins by exaggerating the authority of her own position, and also palliating her own cruelties.

"That which I have done, Abner, I have believed it to be my duty to do: a rash populace cannot be my judge, whatever their insolence has ventured to say: heaven itself has justified me. . . . But since some days fresh trouble has oppressed me. A dream—ought I to give countenance to a dream?—preys upon me, and devours my heart."

She then tells her dream. One night her mother, Jezebel, had appeared before her richly adorned, her face

painted, as was her custom, to hide the marks that time had made. "Tremble," she said, "my daughter, worthy of me; for God, the cruel God of Israel, prevails, and you will fall into his awful hands." Her mother's form had seemed to come near to her bed, and she had stretched forward to embrace it; but she found nothing but a hideous mass of mangled flesh and gore. A child had then appeared before her dressed like a young Hebrew priest. His modest mien and noble dignity for a moment calmed her fears; but all at once he drew a dagger, and in a moment plunged it into her breast. This dream had so haunted Athaliah that she prayed Baal to watch over her life; and she was even moved to go to the God of Israel, and bring him presents, in the hope that he would thereby be appeased, and that he would be merciful to her. For this she asks Mattan's pardon. She then continues her story: when she went to worship in the temple, every one rushed out; prayer was instantly suspended; and as the high priest came towards her, she saw by his side the figure of the young boy in his linen ephod that her fancy had pictured to her in her dream. It is upon this strange occurrence that she desires to consult both Abner and Mattan. Mattan recommends that the child should be put to death, lest he should one day prove himself a dangerous enemy. Abner intercedes for him, and rebukes Mattan, that he, professing to be a minister of peace, should allow his anger to be covered by a specious and hollow zeal. He says that two boys are daily with the high priest at the altar; one is the high priest's son—the other he does not know. Abner retires, and Mattan opens his mind to the queen. He thinks that Abner

and Jehoida have a plot together to dethrone Athaliah, and to put in her place the child whom she saw in her dream, and who may perchance be the high priest's own son. The queen thanks him for his counsel, and orders that the child may be brought to her, telling Mattan at the same time to see that all her troops are armed in case of need.

The child whom Athaliah had seen in her dream was young Joash. He is a boy of nine years old. In his preface, Racine says that though we are told in the Bible that Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, he has made him two years older, so that he may be better able to answer the questions that are put to him. The scene in which he is made to confront Athaliah is the most dramatic in the play. It is the pivot upon which all the action of the tragedy turns. Little Joash does not yet know who he is, nor even what is his name. He thinks that he has been deserted by his mother, and that Jehoida has out of charity adopted him as his son. Hitherto he has not been called Joash, but Eliakim. The name Eliakim is not applied to Joash in Scripture; Racine adopted it simply from choice. When the boy comes in he is attended by Jehosheba, Abner, Zechariah, Salomith, two Levites, and the whole choir. The queen is at once startled by seeing the same boy that she had already seen in her dream.

"*Athaliah.* Wife of Jehoida, is that your son?

Jehosheba. I am not his mother; (*pointing to Zechariah*), this is my son.

Ath. And you, child, who is your father? Answer me.

Jehosh. Heaven, till to-day.

Ath. Why should you answer for him? Let him speak.

Jehosh. At so tender an age, what explanation can he give?

Ath. At his age he is innocent: he has no craft to alter the truth. Let him answer for himself.

Jehosh. (*aside*). Great God, put wisdom in his mouth!

Ath. What is your name?

Joash. I am called Eliakim.

Ath. And who is your father?

Jo. I am, they tell me, an orphan, thrown since my birth into God's paternal arms.

Ath. You are without parents?

Jo. They have forsaken me.

Ath. But you know at least where your home is?

Jo. This temple is my home; I never knew any other.

Ath. But who, then, cared for you in your infant years?

Jo. Does God ever let his little children want? he feeds the birds, and everywhere his hand is seen. I pray to him every day, and every day at his altar he gives me food."

The queen is much astonished; she is touched by the boy's modesty, and by the softness of his speech. Jehosheba would now take the child away; but Athaliah calls him back, and continues:—

"*Ath.* What is your daily occupation?

Jo. I worship God. I am taught his law. In his divine book I learn to read. And already I begin to write it with my own hand.

Ath. And what does this law teach you?

Jo. That God desires us to love him; that he will avenge, sooner or later, those who blaspheme his holy name; that he is the defender of the timid orphan; that he will crush the proud man, and punish the murderer.

Ath. I understand; but all the people in that place, what are they doing?

Jo. Praising God.

Ath. Does God desire that they should always pray?

Jo. Other exercises are banished from his temple.

Ath. What! have you no other pastime? I pity the sad fate of such a child as you. Come into my palace and see my splendour.

Jo. No; for I should then forget the goodness of God.

Ath. I will not ask you to forget him.

Jo. But you do not pray to him.

Ath. You may do so if you like.

Jo. I should see you kneeling before another god.

Ath. I have my god whom I worship, and you may worship yours: they are both powerful gods.

Jo. You must fear him too. Mine only is God, madam. Yours is nothing.

Ath. If you come with me I will give you every kind of pleasure.

Jo. The happiness of wicked people flows away like a torrent.

Ath. And who are the wicked?

Jehosh. Excuse him, madam; he is but a child."

The queen says she wishes to see how the boy has been taught. She invites him to come and live with her. She tells him that she is the queen; he shall sit at her table and shall enjoy all her good things if he will quit his mean occupation and change his present clothes for others. She promises also to treat him as though he were her own son.

"*Jo.* As your son!

Ath. Yes. You say nothing.

Jo. What a father should I leave! And for——

Ath. Well?

Jo. And for what a mother!

Ath. (*to Jehosheba*). His memory is faithful, and in all he says I see the teaching of Jehoida and your own. You employ the quiet in which I leave you to corrupt this simple childhood: you cultivate hate and fury in them—you make my name a horror to them!"

At the same time, she does not try to excuse herself. She boldly avows that she glories in having avenged the house of Ahab. Why should she have pity upon those who had no pity upon her? She will return wrong for wrong, and murder for murder. She abhors the name of David; and though she is of his blood, while she lives his children shall be her enemies.

"*Jehosh.* In all you have done you have triumphed. But God sees, and is our judge.

Ath. This God, who has so long been your hope, what will become of his prophecies? Let him send you your promised king—this son of David in whom you trust. . . . But we shall meet again. Adieu! I have seen what I wished to see, and I am satisfied."

The queen retires, and Jehoida enters attended by his Levites. He had not been present when the queen was questioning Joash; but he was sufficiently near to hear all that passed, and was ready to help the boy in case of need. He thanks Abner for his protection to Joash, and prepares to cleanse with blood the spots which Athaliah's unholy footsteps had polluted. Then the choir comes in and sings.

CHORUS.[1]

What star of lustre strikes our eyes?
How bright does this young wonder rise!
With what a noble scorn
He dares seduction's charms despise;
To high achievements born!

ONE VOICE.

Whilst at the impious queen's decree,
Thousands to Baal basely bend the knee,

[1] This chorus is again from Mr Charles Randolph's translation.

An infant's voice has dared proclaim
The one adorable eternal name.
Thus before Jezebel, defiled with blood,
Denouncing vengeance, great Elijah stood.

CHORUS.

Happy, thrice happy, must he prove,
The child who shares his heavenly father's love;
Who in a blessed hour his voice has heard,
And yields obedience to the sacred word!
'Tis his within the hallowed shrine,
By impious footsteps never trod,
To own the bounteous hand divine,
The guardian care of Israel's God.
O happy youth, so early blest,
On heaven's eternal truth for ever rest!

The third act opens with the approach of Mattan, and Nabal, his associate. As the apostate is preparing to enter the temple, Zechariah steps forward and conjures him to go no farther. It is forbidden, he says, to the profane to go into the place meant for the worshippers of God. Mattan has been sent by the queen with a message for the high priest's wife; and while Jehoshɐba remains in the temple, he and Nabal speak in the porch.

Mattan is here represented as an apostate priest: he was probably a creature of Athaliah's, whom she brought with her from Samaria. In the Bible he is spoken of as a priest of Baal; but we only hear of him indirectly, on account of his iniquities. His death is also mentioned. Nabal, his companion, is altogether an imaginary character. This scene between the two men is interesting, as showing the odious character of Mattan. He has become a worshipper of Baal merely from self-interest.

He does not believe in the false gods; he speaks of them with great disdain. The queen, he says, had built an altar to Baal in Jerusalem, and he thought he could advance himself by worshipping under her orders and officiating as her priest.[1]

Jehosheba comes in, and Mattan addresses her in a flattering tone. He tells her that the queen, in spite of his advice and his remonstrances, has sent him to demand the person of Joash as a hostage. If Joash is given up to her, she will allow the festival to go on without hurt or hindrance. Jehosheba is alarmed, and becomes indignant at the demand. Mattan, of course, does not know who Joash is; but he suspects him to be a child of high rank, whom Jehoida and his wife are keeping concealed for purposes of their own, and in talking to Jehosheba he endeavours to draw as much as he can of her secret from her. He warns her that suspicions are afloat as to who the child is, and he counsels her to contradict any idle rumours. Jehosheba answers him without replying to his question. She tells him that it is blasphemy in him, who has lived in deceit and treachery, to invoke God's name in the cause of truth.

Jehoida then comes into the porch of the temple and finds Mattan talking with his wife. His anger is suddenly roused to the highest pitch. He reproves his wife for allowing herself to speak to the false

1 In the third scene of the third act, and in his preface, Racine clearly charges Athaliah with being the first to introduce the worship of Baal into Jerusalem. The accusation is not warranted, nor is it condemned by anything we read in the Bible. But Dr Adam Clarke, in his Commentary, says in a note to the 18th verse of the 11th chapter of the Second Book of Kings: "It is probable that Athaliah had set up the worship of Baal in Judah, as Jezebel had done in Israel; or probably, it had never been removed since the days of Solomon."

priest; and he hurls his anathema upon Mattan, who slinks away in alarm. Jehosheba entreats her husband to take some further steps for Joash's safety. But Jehoida decides that the time has come for a decisive step. The boy must be made known to the faithful. Instead of hiding him, the royal crown must be placed upon his brow. Azarias, one of the priests, here comes in followed by the chorus, upon whom Jehoida looks with some surprise, asking the cause of their presence. One after another answers him. Should they be separated from God's temple? If God chose Jael to confound his enemies, may not they at least shed their blood for him? Jehoida thanks God for the high courage with which they are inspired. All at once he feels himself moved with prophetic transport, and he calls upon the virgins to second him with their songs. Before he leaves them he tells his wife to get ready the crown that was worn by David. The chorus then commence their songs at the end of the third act.

SALOMITH.[1]

Alas! my sisters, what sad fears,
What consternation now appears?
O God! must we such incense pay
To thee on this renownèd day?

ONE VOICE.

What do our timid eyes behold?
Alas! whoever could divine,
That in the peaceful house of God
Or swords or lances e'er would shine?

[1] The translation of the songs in this chorus is by Mr J. C. Knight, and was first printed in the year 1822.

SALOMITH.

Who can the holy Prophet's words explain,
A blessing do they, or a curse contain?
And will the Lord his sacred arms employ,
His people to deliver or destroy?

CHORUS.

Strange mystery! what evils, yet what good;
What curses, yet what blessings do we hear!
Discordant with the promises of love,
Do not these fearful menaces appear?

THIRD VOICE.

We will not form conjectures which are vain;
Some future day will God the mystery explain.

CHORUS.

His anger must we fear, and must
Upon his loving-kindness trust.

The fourth act opens with solemn preparations for the coronation of Joash. We perceive, of course, that for the performance of "Athalie" pomp and outward magnificence on the stage were necessary from the nature of the subject; and therefore, in writing this play, Racine must have conceived more scenic display than had been thought necessary for the performance of his profane tragedies.[1] Jehosheba comes in with Joash and Zechariah on each side of her. One of the boys is carrying in his hands the book of the Law, and the other is holding David's crown. A Levite precedes them, carrying David's sword. Joash asks his aunt the reason of

[1] Nevertheless, when "Athalie" was first played at Versailles in 1691, it was performed without any theatrical costumes or properties.

so much ceremony. She places the crown upon his head, and tells him that before long his doubts will be cleared up; when that time shall come, he shall know everything.

The boy sees Jehoida, whom he had always looked upon as his father, coming towards him; he rushes into the high priest's arms, and asks him what is going to happen. The high priest tells him it is now time that he knew what were the designs of God. Jehoida brings to the boy's recollection what he had already taught him of the rights and duties of kings, and of their obedience to God. He mentions Joram and Ahaziah as instances of bad men, and he induces Joash to promise him that he will not follow their example. Then prostrating[1] himself at the boy's feet, he renders him the homage due to the king, and bids him be worthy of David his ancestor. The boy is more confounded than before. Jehoida explains to him how his life had been saved, and he calls in the three chiefs of the tribe of Levi and tells them that they see their king. He has taken charge of his childhood; it is now their office, as ministers of God, to protect their sovereign. At the command of the high priest, the Levites swear that they will put Joash on the throne, and that they will not rest until the sword of David has avenged all his enemies. And Jehoida makes Joash promise that he will always make God his first care; that he will punish the wicked and be merciful to the good; that he will have compassion on the poor, recollecting that he was himself once poor and fatherless. Jehosheba in her turn

[1] Here Racine has fallen into an error. Genuflexion before their kings was not a custom with the Jewish people.

bows down before the boy-king. A Levite then enters in great alarm, saying that Athaliah's trumpets are sounding on all sides, that torches are blazing among her standards, and that she is quickly collecting her army. All chance of help, he says, is cut off, for the mountain on which the temple is built is surrounded by Tyrian soldiers; and the enemy has been boasting that Abner is bound in chains. Jehosheba becomes afraid that her boy will be taken from her, but her husband reproves her for her want of confidence in God's power. The high priest divides his forces, placing the Levites at the four sides of the temple, so as to resist any attack should it be made. He exhorts each one courageously to maintain his post, and commands them not to leave the temple until he gives them orders. As he is going out he tells the chorus to offer up their hymns to God.

CHORUS.[1]

Go forth, ye sons of Aaron, go—
Ne'er did your father's bosoms glow
To assert a nobler cause;
Go forth, exert your utmost might,
It is your king for whom ye fight—
Your king, your God, your laws!

ONE VOICE.

Where are the darts thou once didst cast abroad?
Art thou no more a jealous God, O Lord?

ANOTHER VOICE.

Where are thy favours to our fathers given?
Will nothing reach thine ear in our distress
Except the cry of Judah's wickedness?
Alas! hath mercy left the abode of heaven?

[1] This translation is also from the pen of Mr J. C. Knight.

CHORUS.

Where are the darts thou didst once cast abroad?
Art thou no more a jealous God, O Lord?

ONE VOICE.

Of Judah's kings the sole remain!
Of David's stem thou lovely flower!
Must we behold thee fall again
Within a cruel mother's power?
Say, did an angel of the Lord
Thee when a helpless infant save?
Or did the mighty voice of God
Recall thy ashes from the grave?

At the beginning of the fifth act Zechariah comes in to tell his sister Salomith that the dreadful order for the battle has been given. Joash, he says, has been crowned and anointed king, to the great joy and delight of all the Levites. The high priest has set a guard over him, and will not allow him to be exposed to any danger. In the meanwhile Athaliah is scoffing at the brazen gates of the temple; she is waiting until her instruments of war should come to batter them and break them in. Then there is heard a knocking outside the gates, and Abner enters at one door, and Jehoida and Jehosheba at another. It was thought that Abner was in chains, and the arrival of the warrior-chief, now, at the moment of danger, is welcomed with much delight.

Abner relates how he had escaped. The queen had told him that she would spare the temple if Eliakim and a treasure that David had hidden there were immediately given up to her. Jehoida asks him for advice; and Abner advises, in order to save the temple from desecration and from destruction, to give up any

treasure, if any treasure be there concealed. Abner is even disposed to surrender the boy. He has not yet learned who the boy is, and only knows him by the name of Eliakim. Abner is very loyal to the high priest; he would at once die himself, if the sacrifice of his own life would induce the queen to spare Eliakim. However, he counsels Jehoida to trust in the mercy of God; God had saved Moses, and he may now save Eliakim. Abner then turns to the high priest's wife and urges her to persuade her husband that it cannot be right to sacrifice all their lives for the sake of a young boy about whom they know nothing. Time is now of importance, and he exhorts the high priest to come to a decision, as Athaliah's rage is becoming stronger, and Mattan is hourly plying her with wicked counsels. Jehoida at length seems to give his consent to the queen's demand. He tells Abner that he has concealed in the temple a treasure of David's that was intrusted to him. This treasure was the last hope of the Jews, and its safe keeping has been his constant care. But as he is now obliged to show his treasure to the queen, she shall come into the temple attended by her chief captains only. And she must not approach the altar, nor must her soldiers enter the holy building. As to the child, the high priest will in the queen's presence explain his birth, and Abner shall then be judge whether the boy ought to be given up.

Abner goes forth to the queen; and Jehoida warns Ishmael, one of the priests, that his orders must be strictly obeyed, lest suspicions be roused in the mind of Athaliah. Her entry is thus to be prepared.

"*Jehoida.* As soon as this queen, drunk with mad pride,

has once crossed the threshold of the temple, that she may not turn back, let the warlike trumpets that instant sound, and spread a sudden dismay throughout the enemy's camp. Call all the people to the succour of the king, and proclaim to all ears the miracle that Joash lives."

The high priest is surrounded by priests and Levites. He makes them stand round the pillar on which the throne is placed; he seats Joash on the throne, and after a few words of exhortation, he draws a curtain in front of it, so that this group is hidden from the spectators. When these preparations are complete, Athaliah enters.

"*Ath.* I find thee at last, traitor, pernicious author of so many plots, whose hope is in continual disturbance. Enemy of power! thy trust was in thy God. Art thou now undeceived? He has left in my power his temple and thy life. On the very altar where thou sacrificest, there ought I—— But I will content myself with the ransom thou hast offered. Fulfil thy promise. Where is this child, and where is the treasure that thou hidest?

Jehoi. At once shalt thou be satisfied. Behold them both!

[*The curtain is drawn back. Joash is seen on his throne, his nurse kneeling at his right; Azarias, sword in hand, standing at his left hand; Zechariah and Jehoiada kneeling on the steps of the throne; several Levites with drawn swords arranged around.*]

Stand forth, dear child, blood of our kings. Know you, queen, the heir of the holiest of monarchs? At least thou wilt know the marks of thy dagger. Behold thy king, thy son, the son of Ahaziah. Ye people, and thou, Abner, behold Joash!

Ath. Traitor!

Jehoi. Seest thou that faithful woman? Thou knowest well whose nurse she was. He was stolen by Jehosheba from thy rage, received in the temple, and preserved by God. This is the only treasure of David left in my hands.

Ath. Traitor! thy deception will be fatal to him. Soldiers, deliver me from this hateful phantom!

Joad. Soldiers of the living God, defend your king!"

In the meantime the temple is in the hands of the people. The queen finds that her followers do not answer to her call. She upbraids Abner for having, as she says, deceived her; and she tries to force her way out of the temple, threatening Jehoida and Abner with her army which she hears coming to her rescue.

Here, however, Ishmael enters and announces that Athaliah's soldiers have fled. The Levites outside have declared to the people what was going on within—that the son of Ahaziah has been preserved, and the daughter of Ahab has fallen into the snare. At the same time the trumpets have sounded, and spread dismay in Athaliah's camp. Joash is proclaimed king with loud shoutings. The holy city is given up to joy. The people bless God, and him whom he has sent. Baal is held in abomination, the gates of his temple broken, and Mattan, his priest, is slain. Athaliah feels that her last hope is irrevocably gone from her.

"*Ath.* God of the Jews, thou hast got the victory! Yes, it is Joash. I deceive myself no longer. I acknowledge this bearing, the look of Ahaziah: everything betrays the blood that I hate. David, David is triumphant, and Ahab is destroyed. Merciless God, this is thy hand! 'Tis thou that, flattering me with hopes of vengeance, hast twenty times in a day set me against myself; now exciting my remorse for a child, now dazzling me with thought of those treasures which I had feared to give up to flames and pillage. Let him reign, then, this boy, thy care and thy work! and, to mark his advent, let him plunge his sword into my breast. Hear what his mother, dying, desires for him,—desires, did

I say? nay, prays and hopes,—that, faithless to thy law, weary of thy yoke, faithful to the blood of Ahab he has inherited from me—like his grandsire, like his father, this son of David may abolish thy worship, profane thy altars, and avenge Athaliah, Ahab, and Jezebel!"

As she rushes out, followed by the Levites, Jehoida gives the order to seize and slay her outside the temple.

"*Jo.* (*descending from his throne*). God, who seest my trouble and distress, turn away these curses from me! Let them not be fulfilled. Let Joash die before he forget thee.

Jehoi. (*to the Levites*). Call the people, that they may see their king. Let them come and swear their allegiance to him. King, priests, people, full of gratitude, let us confirm the holy alliance of Jacob with God, and, humbled by the thought of all our wanderings, renew our vows to him who saves us. Abner, take thy place by the king. (*Enter a Levite.*) Has that infidel suffered for her crimes?

The Levite. The sword has expiated the horrors of her life. Jerusalem, so long a prey to her fury, is delivered at last from her hateful yoke.

Jehoi. By this terrible end, learn, O king of the Jews! —forget this never—That kings have in heaven an awful judge, innocence an avenger, orphans a father.

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